A Stylistic Analysis of Two Selected Poems

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Abstract

This paper presents a stylistic analysis of two poems of well-known poets of the English literature, namely; E.E. Cummings and the Irish noble laureate Seamus Heaney. The researcher's attempt here is to approach Cummings's poem "maggie and milly and molly and may" and Heaney's "A Kite for Aibhín" from the stylistics' point of view. The paper also analyzes the poems using the tools of linguistics with a view to make their meaning explicit.

It is worth noting that stylistics as a scientific discipline is really beneficial to those who are teaching and studying English language and literature. No matter whether English is the native, second or foreign language. Not only foreign students but also the speakers of the English language can benefit from stylistics. They can get linguistic besides literary competence. Nowadays, stylistics with its tools and methods of linguistics can help to a logical and scientific understanding of the literary texts based on linguistic evidence.

Keywords: Poetry, stylistics, deviation.

تحليل اسلوبي لقصيدتين مختارتين
ايمان عادل جعفر
كلية التربية للبنات ـ قسم اللغة الانكليزية ـ جامعة بغداد

الملخص
يقدم هذا البحث تحليل اسلوبي لقصيدتين مختارتين لشاعربين معروفيين في الادب الانكليزي وهما : اي اي كمنكز وقصيدته "ماجي ميلي مولي ومي" وشيمس حني وقصيدته " طائرة ل أفين " ومن ثم محاول اكتشاف الخصائص الاسلوبية لهاتين القصيدتين وذلك باستخدام ادوات علم الاسلوب من اجل جعل معنى القصيدتين واضحا.
من الجدير بالذكر ان علم الاسلوب كفرع علميَ مفيد جدا لاولئك الذين يدرسون ويدرسون اللغة والادب الانكليزية . بغض النظر ان اللغة الانكليزية هي اللغة الام او اللغة الثانية او اللغة الاجنبية . ليس فقط الطلاب الاجانب بل ايضاً المتحدثون باللغة الانكليزية يمكنهم الاستفادة من علم الاسلوب حيث انهم يستطيعون الحصول على المهارة اللغوية فضلاً عن المهارة الادبية . في يومنا هذا , يساعد علم الاسلوب مع ادواته وطرقه على الفهم العلمي والمنطقي للنصوص الادبية بالاستناد على الدلائل اللغوية.
الكلمات المفتاحية: علم الاسلوب, اللغة الشعرية, الانحراف

Introduction

The rapid growth of linguistics into an independent discipline and its application to the study of literature opened new horizons in the field of literary criticism in the twentieth century. "There are a number of recent developments in and around linguistics which deserve to be better known to literary critics for they point to the original ways of reading and analysis and literary criticism, as a discipline has always welcomed innovation" (Fowler,1971:9).

The purpose of this research is to introduce the tools of stylistics and their practical application in poetry analysis to the students and readers of English language and literature. In fact, stylistics works as a linking bridge between two important fields i.e. linguistics and literature.

However, the researcher's strong intention, as manifested in the title of this research, is to constantly emphasize and explore the linguistic aspects of the present stylistic study.

Stylistics and Style

Stylistics takes a close look at the text and analyzes its significant language forms for the sake of interpretation, it comes very close to practical criticism. Even in the reader response theory criticism or reception theory stylistics has a role to play. Stylistics, in fact, has a great effect on almost every kind of critical approach. According to various dictionaries, the term "stylistics" means "the science of literary style" or the "art of forming good style in writing". Leech and Short (1981:13) also define it as "the linguistic study of style". Widdowson (1975:4) defines stylistics as follows:

> "By 'stylistics' I mean the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation and I shall take the view that what distinguishes stylistics from literary criticism on the one hand and linguistics on the other is that it is essentially a means of linking the two…..stylistics, however, 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 later."

One of the contributions of stylistics, apart from linguistic insights and linguistic tools of modern criticism, is its objective way of analysis. "Language oriented theories try to develop an objective methodology of analysis and interpretation by focusing on the literature entity independent of an author's intentions" (Kumar, 1987:40).

Verdonk (2002:4) defines stylistics as "the analysis of distinctive expression in language and the description of its purpose and effect".

Moreover, Bradford (1997:1) points out that stylistics is "an elusive and slippery topic every contribution to the vast, multifaceted discipline of literary studies will involve an engagement with style".

With its objectivity, insights from linguistics and useful terminology, stylistics makes our interpretation valid and enhances our enjoyment of literature. Since stylistics has become an inseparable part of contemporary criticism, no serious student can simply ignore it. This is one of the reasons why literary critics do not always separate stylistic study from a wider theory of literature. The fabrication of situations and resulting moral evaluation are the writer's purpose and this purpose cannot be entirely separated from the style which is its means and its fine texture. The linguistic and literary patterns fuse as color and compositions in a painting (Carter & Stockwell, 2008: 44).

The linguistic analysis of literary language is known as stylistics. This is a somewhat misleading term: the word 'style' was once applied to different varieties of language, such as the language of religion, or of legal documents. Both these varieties are now known as registers. Meanwhile, the words style and stylistics have acquired the somewhat specialized, narrow usage of linguistics applied to literature. Literary language is often deviant. Typically, certain features have been highlighted, or foregrounded, often by making them strange (ibid).

Aitchison (1999:141) uses a simile to describe the process of writing a literary language. Writers are like knitters trying to invent new patterns. They avoid obvious sequences such as "black despair", "blue sky" and device new, original combinations,

which attract readers and listeners. They try to compose unusual phrases, like Dylan Thomas's phrase "a grief ago" astonishes the readers (Aitchison,1999:141).

According to Wales (1989:435), the word **style** is quite difficult to define. The reason behind this difficulty is related to the way how can readers understand it. This might affect the features related to stylistics, which is part of linguistics. Moreover, she has listed the most common features of the term style which are summarized below:

1-Style means the way of expressing oneself in writing and speaking, putting it in a similar way, there is a distinctive style for every person in doing things such as in playing games or thinking in as a special way of a solution for a certain problem, there are also styles in speaking one can make jokes, and the other may be more serious, also style can be good or bad (ibid).

2- Wales (1989:435) pointed out that each person has his own way of doing an action or writing about the same theme or even describing the same painting. She ascertains that style can be different in various situations and according to the degree of formality what she called "style shifting" (ibid). Furthermore, the genres of literature also differ in their style whether fiction, poetry or any other type of literature. Wales (ibid) also mentioned style can vary through time, for example, the style of modern and metaphysical poetry is quite different.

3- Another important point is mentioned in Wales' dictionary is that style is measured by the number of linguistic features. The personality of each writer, for instance, can be reflected in his works. His way of choosing words and combining them is really distinguished. If a keen reader reads Jane Austen's novels, e.g. *Persuasion* and *Pride and Prejudice* he can notice the similarity in the style of the writer of the two texts (Wales, 1989:435).

According to Carter and Stockwell (2008: 44) there are many different styles according to the style of the author e.g. racy, formal and colloquial one. Further, they defined Style as:
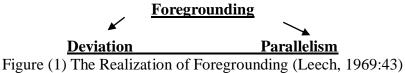
> "A choice of certain structures over others available in the language. To claim that style is a choice is not, of course, to claim that it is always a conscious choice. Indeed, if one had to make all phonological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic choices consciously, it would take a very long time to say anything at all. In literature, as in all discourse, a sense of the best way of putting something can be intuitive or conscious; the result as far as the reader is concerned will be much the same" (ibid).

Linguistics which represents the broader discipline and stylistics is a part of it, helps readers to discover the hidden clues about the language. It can act as the screw that dismantles the pieces of the whole text into smaller understandable parts. It can be a great help to interpret the meaning of a certain literary work. Carter and Stockwell(2008: 39) pointed out linguistics can give readers a point of view, a way of looking at a text that helps readers to develop a consistent analysis, and urges them to ask questions about the language of the text that they come through.

Foregrounding

Before starting the actual analysis of the selected poems, it is important to bring the attention to one of the important terms used in stylistics, which is **foregrounding**. Whenever this term comes, we immediately attach it with stylistics. It is the most important part of the stylistic analysis in poetry. Foregrounding, giving unusual prominence to one element or property of a text, relative to other less

noticeable aspects. Literary works are special by virtue of the fact that they foreground their own linguistic status, thus drawing attention to how they say something rather than to what they say: poetry 'deviates' from everyday speech and from prose by using metre, surprising metaphors, alliteration, and other devices by which its language draws attention to itself (Leech, 1969:43).

■ Foregrounding is realized by linguistic deviation and linguistic parallelism.

Foregrounding

↙   ↘

Deviation   **Parallelism**

Figure (1) The Realization of Foregrounding (Leech, 1969:43)

The researcher finds it is necessary to mention the types of deviation before starting the actual analyses.

Leech (1969:42-52) says (according to his study of various poems collected in a certain period of time) that there are different kinds of deviation found in poetry. They are listed as follows:

1. **Lexical Deviation** This deviation is created by the poets by using words in a special way that differs from its ordinary usage i.e. giving words a deeper value to express meaning and to show an aesthetic value in the poem.
2. **Semantic Deviation**, this is the deviation that shows how an ordinary simple word can have an astonishing meaning. Sometimes the poet's own life and culture can affect the meaning of the same word.

3. **Phonological Deviation,** this deviation related to the sounds which are created on purpose to create music with consideration to rhyme.

4. **Morphological Deviation,** this type of deviation is about how words can be formed.

5. **Grammatical Deviation,** in this kind of deviation, poets neglect the rules related to sentence structure. They deliberately neglect the usage of the full stop within sentences. In addition, they use the tenses of the sentences in a wrong way etc.

6. **The Use of Dialect**,
The standard dialect cannot fulfil the needs of the poets to express what they do feel and for this reason they borrow certain features from the dialect of their native language which can suffice the purpose to express their own emotions through writing their poems by using "refined dialects" which is called (Dialectism) by Leech.
7. **The Use of Register**
Register (also called "professional dialect") is represented in the use of special vocabulary, grammar, etc. These are used by people in certain situations and events. Register is not used by all people, but only a limited group of people. Sometimes writers use "register mixing" which means different registers (Leech, 1969:42-52).

8. Historical Deviation

In this kind of deviation, poets use archaic words that are no longer used in daily language. They do so in order to enhance the aesthetical value of the poem. Poets in their poetry may include words from Latin or Greek languages such as (thou, ere, hither… etc).

9. Graphological Deviation

Graphological deviation is exemplified by the neglecting of the rules related to punctuation, e.g. writing without using capital letters, or without using spaces or rhymes.

Leech listed the above kinds of deviation which can be found in poetry. It is worth noting that, it doesn't mean that every poem has all these deviations, one or two kinds may occur in one poem (ibid).

Hence, some of these deviations will be the model of this paper in analyzing the selected poems. These include (grammatical, morphological, graphological, and phonological) deviations.

1- A Stylistic Analysis of "maggie and milly and molly and may"

Before starting with the analysis of this poem, the researcher finds it necessary to give a brief introduction about the writer and the poem. E. E. Cummings (1894-1962) was the representative of American modern experimental poets. Khalil (2009:31) comments about Cumming's style; "chewing the conventional rhymes and syntactic structure of poems and even rejecting to transfer information and emotion in the way of conventional printing. In other words, He has his own method of writing poetry and has special peculiarities in handling language in his own way".

maggie and milly and molly and may

1- maggie and milly and molly and may
2-went down to the beach (to play one day)
3- and maggie discovered a shell that sang
4-so sweetly she couldn't remember her troubles, and
5-milly befriended a stranded star
6-whose rays five languid fingers were;
7-and molly was chased by a horrible thing
8-which raced sideways while blowing bubbles:and
9-may came home with a smooth round stone
10-as small as a world and as large as alone.
11-for whatever we lose (like a you or a me)
12.it's always ourselves we find in the sea

First of all, the rhyme scheme of this poem is AABCDDEFGGHH, so we can easily notice that the lines (3-4) and (7-8) break the rhyming scheme of the poem. There is also a kind of parallelism between the two lines (3-7), this is also right between (4-8), these lines end with (troubles, and – bubbles, and) (Xueyong, Yu).

To analyze the poem stylistically, it is necessary to mention the foregrounding techniques used by the poet.

A Stylistic Analysis at the Phonological Level:

This lyric has a nursery rhyming, song for little children. So there is ample use of alliteration. It helps in creating rhythm and music suitable for a table for example:

  i. maggie and milly and molly and may
  ii. so sweetly
  iii. stranded star
  iv. five languid fingers
  v. blowing bubbles
  vi. a smooth round stone

At the phonological level, there are many examples of rhyme, end rhyme, and internal rhyme. "may-day, stone-alone, me-sea".

There is a pattern in stressed and unstressed syllables correspondingly referred to as the 'ictus' (/) and the 'remiss' (x). The basic foot in this poem is iamb with some variations, e.g.:

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  /    x   /    x   /    x   /
maggie and milly and molly and may
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There is a repetition of the conjunction 'and' which gives rise to a typical rhythm found in children's song. The number of syllable line-wise is 1-2-9-3

The number of syllables in many lines is similar so it helps to create rhyme. Thus, all these devices help create nursery rhyme flavor which is thematically blended with the tone of the moral fable.

2- Analysis at the Morphological Level

The words used in this poem are those which figure in children's language or domain. They are related to the toys or for which children have attraction. So they evoke the world of children and their interests. These can be treated as words of a set of their associated words or collocated words. For example:

"Beach – sea – standed – star – shell – sing – horrible thing – round stone – bubbles – blowing- Sang-not remember troubles, befriended- chased."

All these are the words from a set. They create or evoke an atmosphere at the sea-beach and how children help themselves and meet their interests, the use of too many '*ands*' in the first line of the poem cannot go unnoticed. It distinguishes the four people at the same time also groups them.

3- Analysis at the Syntactic Level:

Note the grammatical deviation in line11 "Like a you or me" (misclassification- word of one class for another) here the personal pronouns turn up as heads of noun phrases. See also the deviant syntax in the use of 'alone' as an object of comparison. "As small as a world and as long as alone". Notice the deviation in the following line: "Whose rays five languid fingers were" (dislocation). These two examples of fragmentation/ parenthesis placed in bracket, e.g. (to play one day); like a you or a me). The use of the indefinite article 'a' modifying pronouns 'you' and 'me' as in like a you or a me. It suggests anyone in the world in a novel manner.

In line no. 3 and 4 there is a case of syntactic elaboration e.g. and Maggie discovered *"a shell that sang so sweetly she couldn't remember the troubles"*.

There are many cases of parallel structures:

1- Maggie discovered a shell   S.V.O
2- She couldn't remember the troubles   S.V.O
3- Milly befriended a stranded star   S.V.O
4- We loose   S.V.
5- We find   S.V.

4- Analysis at the Graphological Level:

Capitalization is an important element in Cummings' poems. His style of writing poetry is manifested by violating the regular rules of capitalization or punctuation in general. He often writes proper names in small letters. Even his own name is written using small letters. Rather than capitalizing the first word of every sentence, or every proper name, Cummings seems to have an entirely different use for capitalization in a poem. In this poem, there are numerous examples of the graphological deviation. Examples from the poem include; "maggie, milly, molly and may" also starting the lines of the poem without capitalization (Xueyong, Yu.www.).

5- Figurative Use of Language
1- "Its ourselves we find in the sea (of life)" and "whose rays five languid fingers were".
These two lines are metaphors, which mean an implied comparison between two things of unlike nature.
2-"as small as a world and as large as alone"
This line is a simile. Notice the use of the word "as" to compare the likeness of the size of the world. A simile is a figure of speech by which one thing, action, or relation is likened or explicitly compared, often with as or like, to something of a different kind or quality.
By mentioning an example of stylistic analysis, one can easily recognize the patterns of alliteration, repetition, and examine these patterns, which contribute to meaning and our interpretation of the poetic contents and effects. The next poem will enhance the stylistic interpretation by giving another style and technique of another poet.

It is necessary to note that diction is the choice of words a poet uses to bring meaning across. In working through a poem, it is useful to question why a certain word is used, and what kind of effect is achieved with the choice and placement of the word. Besides its implied meaning, diction also adds to the mood and attitude of a poem; the choice of words may be used to evoke a feeling in the reader. Widdowson(1992:12) has described poems as:

> "Poems are uses of language, but in many ways they are peculiar uses of language. Their meanings are elliptical and elusive, deflections from the familiar. They seem often to be perversely obscure in their flouting of conventional standards of clarity and common sense. They are frequently eccentric in choice of word and turn of phrase. They are cast in curious prosodic forms of rhythm and rhyme, assembling language not, as is usual, in sequence but in parallel lines".

One more crucial point that readers must put in their minds to a better understanding, they can analyze a word by its literal meaning first, then state whether there is an implied meaning based on its context.

The process of investigating or analyzing poems using stylistics sheds the lights on certain deviant characteristics of a poem. On their part, these characteristics cannot be similar between the two poems. Each text has its own distinguished features.

2. A Stylistic Analysis of Seamus Heaney's "A Kite for Aibhín"

"A Kite for Aibhín" is one of the poems in Seamus Heaney's new collection, which is *Human Chain*, this collection is published in 2010. It is an example of the twenty-first-century poems. In this poem collection, Heaney discussed the parent and child, husband and a wife, past, and future; we can feel that all the themes in this collection are related to humans being. *Human Chain* is Heaney's twelfth collection of poems (**http://www.helium.com).**

"A Kite for Aibhín" is a greeting to Aibhin echoes the poem of the Italian poet Giovanni Pascoli's "L'AQUILONE" in English "The Kite".

"A Kite for Aibhín"

After 'L'Aquilone' by Giovanni Pascoli (1855-1912)
1 .Air from another life and time and place,
2. Pale blue heavenly air is supporting
3. A white wing beating high against the breeze,
4. And yes, it is a kite! As when one afternoon
5.All of us there trooped out
6.Among the briar hedges and stripped thorn,
7. I take my stand again, halt opposite
8. Anahorish Hill[i] to scan the blue,
9. Back in that field to launch our long-tailed comet.

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[i] An important place from the poet's past.

10. And now it hovers, tugs, veers, dives askew[ii],
11.Lifts itself, goes with the wind until
12.It rises to loud cheers from us below.
13. Rises, and my hand is like a spindle
14.Unspooling, the kite a thin-stemmed flower
15.Climbing and carrying, carrying farther, higher
16. The longing in the breast and planted feet
17.And gazing face and heart of the kite flier
18. Until string breaks and—separate, elate—
19. The kite takes off, itself alone, a windfall.

    This poem is a celebration of the birth of Heaney's grand-daughter,her name is Aibhín[iii]. The poet wrote this poem in the honor of the family's newborn member (**http://www.helium.com**).
    Actually, this poem recalls "A Kite for Michael and Christopher" from Heaney's 1984 collection *Station Island.*
    Let us now take a close look at the poem; the language of the poem is rather simple. The total number of the words in the poem is (143) words. This poem has rather various rhyming scheme, which is; (a,b,c,d,e,d,f,g,f,h,I,h,j….etc).
    Also, this poem consists of (6) stanzas and the last line "The kite takes off, itself alone, a windfall". Each stanza consists of three lines, which is called a triplet (Ibid).
Aesthetic use of language can be clarified as follows:
1-Assonance: the repetition of the vowel sound to create internal rhyming within the poetic line. l**i**fe/ t**i**me; p**a**le/**ai**r; wh**i**te/h**i**gh; b**ea**ting/br**ee**ze
2-Alliteration: the repetition of the consonant sound, for example; the third line **w**hite-**w**ing, **b**eating –**b**reeze , also in the eleventh line; **w**ith –**w**ind, and the fifteenth line; **C**limbing –**c**arrying.
3-Free repetition: which means the repetition of full words in the poem. For example; the word "and" is repeated so many times in the whole poem about 10 times, also the word "kite", and the word "carrying" in line (15). If we want to know the reason for using free repletion the only answer is that to create a musical effect and to emphasize certain point that the poet has in his mind.
4- Simile: in line (13) "my hand is like a spindle", we can easily recognize similes by the use of the words "as or like".
    After dismantling the language of the poem from the aesthetic point of view, there will be an attempt to discover the right interpretation of the poem.
    The first two lines are describing the physical atmosphere, including the air which the poet describes as "Air from another life and time and place", refers to something special or rare, and "heavenly" as he mentions in the second line. The third line is a metaphoric line in which the kite is described as "A white wing beating high against the breeze", the wing which is flying against the heavenly air in the sky. After this description, he ascertains that it is a kite by using the word 'yes'. He also mentioned in the same line that the family gathered in one afternoon to watch this flying kite. All this celebrating the birth of the newborn child, so the kite can represent the child, and all the family members are gathered to attend this great event. Then after

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[ii]/əˈskju:/ adverb: Not in a straight or level position.
[iii] /aye-veen/

this peaceful description, he mentions "Among the briar hedges and stripped thorn", the thorn and briar' to refer to the delivery process of the child or for the waiting process which is as we can say in our daily life "on pins and needles".

   In line (7) the poet continues to describe his way of dealing with this event or situation. In line (8), he makes a reference to "Anahorich Hill" one of the places from the poet's early childhood, when he was a schoolboy, this place stick to his memory. Actually, he recalls the memory of this green place, this place in which water springs from the earth making everything alive and green (Ibid).

   In line (10) and (11), the poet comes back to describe the kite, he mentions that after recalling some memories. He said the all the family members are watching the kite, and then he uses several vital verbs { hovers, tugs, veers, dives } in this line to describe the movement of this flying object.

   Line (12) the family encourages the kite as if it is a person, Heaney uses "rise" opposite to "below" referring to the position of the kite and the family members.

   In line (13) the poet uses a simile; he makes similarity between his hand and a spindle (spinning wheel), which rolls up the thread of the kite.

   Line (14) and (15) an allegory of parenthood is created by the poet, he is describing how skillful is the kite flyer is "Unspooling, the kite a thin-stemmed flower". Actually, he encourages the kite to soar "Climbing and carrying, carrying farther, higher"

   Line (16) and (17) refer to the infant's longing to the breast of the mother and looking at her face. Finally, line (18) and (19) refer to the childbirth and to the separating process of the umbilical cord which connects the mother and the child. Readers can notice the long hyphen referring to this process, then the newborn child comes down by itself as a gift by nature, the poet uses "windfall" the most appropriate climax to the very beginning of the kite in the air (ibid).

Conclusions

   Throughout the research, there has been an attempt to characterize the nature of the poems and to indicate an approach to their understanding which allows access to the significance of these two poems.

   The reason for choosing two poems of two different poets and not two poems of one poet is to make clear that stylistic analysis can be more clarified by choosing different styles because each artist has his own style distinguishing him from the others. Thus, stylistic analysis would be more explicit.

   Stylistics can tell us how to know the constituent parts of a literary text and enables us to document their operations, but in doing so it must be based on the terminology and methodology of other disciplines which focus upon language in the real world. These disciplines may include linguistics, sociolinguistics, semiotics, and other disciplines which involve the context and pragmatic purpose of communication.

   The researcher comes to the conclusion, that through stylistic tools of foregrounding and its types, one can reach to the right interpretation of the poem, even if there is no prior knowledge about the literary work. Not forgetting that words are the keys to the door which leads directly to the meaning and interpretation of any genre of literary works. In this way, from a humble researcher's point of view, stylistics gives us in one way the opportunity to enjoy the creativity of English literature, especially English poetry. In another way, stylistics uses the scientific and the objective look of linguistic analysis.

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