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LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF TEXT INTERPRETATION IN FICTION

Abstract: The development of literary approaches to appreciate texts offers distinctive ways and purposes. The various approaches offered so far are about post-structuralism, postmodernism, feminist, gender, post colonialism, and some others. Those are practiced by scholars who are interested in studying literature. Studying literature means studying text, so language enthusiasts attempt to appreciate it by applying a different approach, stylistics. Stylistics is the study of style in language use including literary works. What makes this method different from other literary criticism is the employment of the linguistic features in the texts: graphology, phonology, lexis, and syntax.

Keywords: approach, language, linguistics, literary, text.

INTRODUCTION

Literary work has been appreciated in numerous ways. People have been applying various approaches to appreciate literary work, such as post-structuralism, postmodernism, feminist, lesbian/gay, new historicism, Marxist, and post colonialism. The development of those approaches triggers scholars to improve the approaches year by year. The popularity of post colonial studies is one of the examples. Many scholars reject the claims to universalism and believe in the need of examining the representation of other cultures in their respective literature [1]. That bid is to appreciate texts in a distinct way so that the readers can see the unseen parts of the texts.

Language is a core in the text consumption. The various types of text create different types of style. The job for language enthusiasts is of course to observe the language used in texts. Consequently, we need a suitable method to appreciate them. In linguistic studies, stylistics is often used by scholars to study texts. Stylistics can be defined as “the analysis of distinctive expression in language and the description of its purpose and effect” [2]. Barry adds that this approach uses the methods and findings of the science of linguistics in the analysis of literary texts. Therefore, stylistics is not only used to observe newspaper headlines, but also speeches, articles, even literary works.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In conducting a stylistic study, we pay attention to the context of situation which refers to, among others, linguistic features in a text. Verdonk proposes the structures of language to observe: graphology, phonology, lexis, and syntax.

Graphology

In graphology, stylisticians notice the typographical features of a text such as punctuation, fonts, grapheme size, and grapheme layout. Norgaard suggests that typographical features can help us to discover and explore the meaning-potential of the visual aspects of printed verbal language in literature. Leech states that graphology refers to the whole writing system: punctuation, paragraphing, and spacing. Bilal and Cheema summarizes that graphology deals with systematic formation, structure, and punctuation in a sentence [3].

An example of graphology in stylistic study is found below, the three lines of the poem entitled Clearances by Seamus Heaney:

Fear of affectation made her affectInadequacy whenever it came to
Pronouncing words 'beyond her'. Bertold Brek.

(Cited in Verdonk)

Verdonk analyzes that the inverted commas round the phrase 'beyond her' appear to confirm the son's suspicion that his mother's mispronunciation of words do not come naturally to her. It is whereas the italics and misspelling of 'Bertold Brek' are strongly suggestive of her "inadequacy"

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lexis

Lexis refers to vocabulary, collocation, connotation, metaphor, and other figures of speech. Leuween defines that connotation involves the discursive import of typographic signs into a context where they do not previously belong. The symbols used in the literary work should be enquired where they are from and how they constitute meanings. Unlike connotation, metaphor attempts to seek the similarity of the symbols used in the work, or the signifier, with their signified. "You are my rose" can be interpreted that "rose" refers to the person I love. The symbol or signifier "rose" here constitutes the similar quality of "you."

Yeasmin et al. argue that the choice of words in a literary work can reflect its underlying meanings and ideas [4]. The text Shooting Elephants contains words such as riot, target, imperialism, oppressors, prisoners, convicts, tyranny, and many others. Those words reveal that the political situation of the story. Those words give the associated feeling and make the text produce meanings.

Bilal and Cheema conduct a lexical analysis in Wordsworth's Early Spring. In his work, Wordsworth likes to use personification. Below is the example.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower, The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower Enjoy the air it breathes.

(Cited in Bilal and Cheema)

In the lines above, Wordsworth represents the full blossom of spring by giving the flowers the human ability to breathe and enjoy. In addition to attracting the readers' attention, here, the poet also attemptsto describe the beauty of nature.

Syntax

The other linguistic feature in doing stylistic analysis is syntax. Syntax refers to grammatical structures including sentence, clause, and phrase elements. Hillier observes three variables in doing stylistics which are related to syntax [5]. She pays attention to the mode, field, and tenor of texts. Mode refers to the text as a product, meaning that what the readers perceive is only the texts regardless the background of the writers. Field refers to the consumption of text by the reader of literary work. The readers pay attention to the basic content of the work. Tenor refers to the writers and readers of the particular texts.

Transitivity analysis proposed by Halliday is commonly used by stylisticians nowadays. This kind of analysis observes the processes in the texts: material, verbal, mental, relational, behavioral, and existential. To recognize each process, a verb is the tool to determine the type of each process. Material verbs mark the material process, verbal verbs mark the verbal process, mental verbs mark the mental process, linking verbs mark the relational process, behavioral verbs mark the behavioral process, and there and non referent it mark the existential process.

Each process is also composed by its participants. The material process has Actor, Goal, and Affected participants. The verbal process has Sayer, Receiver, and Verbiage participants. The mental process has Senser and Phenomenon participants. The relational process has Carrier-Attribute, Identifier-Identified, and Possessor-Possessed participants. The behavioral process has Behavior participant. The existential process has Existent participant.

Nguyen conducts transitivity analysis to uncover the personality of the character in Hoa

Pham's Heroic Mother. The different representation of the processes in Pham's Heroic Mother to describe the character can be seen below.

Material : I **do** my exercise near Hoan Kiem lake

Relational : I **am** a kindly grandmother

(Cited in Nguyen)

The use of I as the Agent in the work reveals that the character appears as a sole participant. The material verb do shows that as a mother, she devotes her energy in her hard times. The main character portrays herself as being "a kindly grandmother". That is the way she defends herself against her relatives' misjudgment and their inappropriate attitudes towards her. What is more, by stating her quality of being "kindly" she may believe that it is more important to be herself than to mind the words of others.

How Stylistics Works

Barry argues, "Stylistics attempts to provide a commentary which is objective and scientific, based on concrete quantifiable data, and applied in a systematic way." To conduct a stylistic study, a researcher should be prepared with his linguistic competence so that his analysis can be comprehensive [5]. As a consequence, a stylistic study may focus on the phonological devices only, for instance. The knowledge of sound patterning is important so that the types of phonological devices and their effects can be uncovered.

To do so, Barry suggests some characteristics how stylistics works to analyze literary texts. Firstly, Stylistics emphasizes connections between literary language and everyday language. The plainer the language use in literary works, the easier it is to understand. Poetic language of a literary work sometimes becomes barrier for people to appreciate and analyze it. People tend to choose non-literary works to analyze. However, the complexity language use in literary works should become a challenge for stylisticians. We can pay attention to its complexity as the data to interpret what happens in a particular literary work, and why the writer chooses such a style.

Secondly, stylistics uses specialized technical terms and concepts which derive from the science of linguistics (Barry, 1995:208). It makes how stylistics is different from other approaches. The linguistics terms used in stylistics are not used in daily life. To call a terminology, we need to find its examples and proofs in the work. How certain terms, such as allegory and transitivity are found must be equipped with their existence in the work. Consequently, we can figure out the meanings and contexts of the work.

CONCLUSION

Linguistic features in literary work can serve as strong evidences to interpret the work. The existence of certain construction, punctuation and paragraphing for example, can represent the human character in the work or the writer's style. The choice of sounds found in the words has its own purpose. The writer may show his or her intelligence to make sounds in beautiful constraints. It can also be used to attract the readers. The choice of certain lexical features also reveals the reason why the writer uses personification, for instance. The verbs used in literary work become other tools to observe what happens with the agent in a clause. Those previous examples show that the study of text, either with literary criticism or stylistics, is a delicate research to do. Stylistics is an effective approach to study the style of language in literary works. The readers or researchers can gain more understanding of the works by means of the features found in them.

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