

Stylistic Analysis of *The Voice*

Hafiz Ahmad Bilal

Department of English, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan

Tel: 92-321-600-2709 E-mail: ahmadbilal.uos@gmail.com

Bushra Laraib (Corresponding author)

Department of English, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan

Tel: 92-336-396-2969 E-mail: laraib_vip90@yahoo.com

Maria Mustafa

Department of English, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan

Tel: 92-336-765-8150 E-mail: maari_malik@yahoo.com

Saadia Iqbal

Department of English, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan

Tel: 92-341-787-0513 E-mail: sadiaiqbal852@yahoo.com

Muhammad Iqbal Kundi

Department of English, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan

Tel: 92-300-799-5409 E-mail: iqbal.kundi@gmail.com

Received: June 13, 2012 Accepted: June 27, 2012 Published: September 1, 2012

doi:10.5296/ijl.v4i3.2326 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v4i3.2326>

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze the stylistic features of V.S Pritchett's story 'The Voice'. First of all it gives an overview of stylistics and the features being analyzed, and then the

actual purpose behind the stylistic analysis is disclosed. The concern here is to analyze the linguistics patterns as to how certain stylistic devices tend to work together and how do they change the viewing perspective of the reader when he is done with all the analysis.

Keywords: Stylistic features, Devices, Devices, Linguistic patterns

1. Introduction

Stylistics is the study of style. Style is the use of language by a writer or a speaker in a specific way. Leech (1969) defines style as the way of speaking, writing or performing something. Style means that how something is said. Widdowson (1975) defines stylistics as “The study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation” (p 3). He also distinguishes stylistics and literary criticism. Lawal (1997) defines style as a feature of language that deals with choices of diction, phrases, sentences and linguistic materials within a text. Linguistic interpretation of literary meaning and aesthetic effect of literary texts is main purpose of stylistic study.

1.1 Stylistic Features

Four basic stylistic features are discussed in this paper, phonological, lexical, syntactic and semantic.

1.1.1 Phonological Features

Phonology is the study of sound system of a language. Phonological analysis of a text means to analyze sound patterns in it, formation of words and utterances by the systematic use of sound in a language. Lodge (2009) states that phonology deals with linguistic systems specially the way in which differences of meanings are represented through sound in language. Phonological devices present in the story are repetition, alliteration, consonance and assonance.

1.1.2 Lexical Features

Lexis is the total vocabulary that makes a language. Words used in a language are its lexical features.

1.1.3 Syntactic Features

Syntactic analysis of a piece of language means that what types of phrases, clauses or sentences are present in it.

Tallerman (1998) defines Syntax as “sentence construction” (p 1), how phrases and sentences are formed by the combination of words. Syntactic features of a text or speech are its phrases, clauses and sentences.

1.1.4 Semantic Features

U. Weinreich (1966) distinguished a paradigmatic semantic feature from a transfer feature. This distinction has made semantic features possible to be used in a broader sense.

Semantics is derived from the Greek word ‘seme’, meaning sign. The word ‘meaning’ can be defined in many ways, but semantics can be defined as “study of meaning in the language”. German philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein’s defines meanings as; “The meaning of a word is its function in language”.

There are two components in semantics. *Simile* is a device that expresses likeness between

different objects or events. *Metaphor* is a device for seeing something in terms of something else; it brings out this-ness of that, or that-ness of this.

1.1.5 Morphological Features

The term morphology is the study of words, their internal structure and of the systematic form meaning correspondence between words, according to present day linguistics (Greet E. Booji). In linguistics morphology is recognition, interpretation and description of the structure of a given language's morpheme and other linguistics units like words, affixes etc.

2. The Story

A great English writer, essayist, critic, novelist and journalist of 20th century, Victor Sawdon Pritchett (V.S.Pritchett, 1900-1997), whose career crossed over 60 years, write "The Voice". He became popular with his short stories, in which he portrayed common Englishmen with respect and understanding humor.

There are two major characters in 'The Voice', Morgan and Rev. Lewis. When the story is started, Morgan, the priest is buried under the debris of church that had been brought down due to explosion of a bomb. He was singing a hymn through which the rescue workers came to know about his presence. Morgan was predecessor of Lewis who was now in charge of the church. Although both of them were extremely jealous from each other and hated each other but after seeing Morgan in trouble Lewis could not help stop him and rushed towards debris forgetting all his biasness. He repeatedly calls Morgan and asks him to sing. While saving Morgan, Lewis himself fell down due to crack down on the floor and he started crying and calling Morgan for help. After few moments he reached the ground and became somehow relaxed.

Morgan asks Lewis that he had not ever felt fair in his life before that, and tells him about his being in the church. At the end, the rescue workers hear something new "A ruddy Welsh choir". Hard times and troubles had united them as it is their ability to unite human beings, and it is main theme of the story. Another thing, which is revealed, is that catharsis is a main thing through which a man feels quite easy, and our attention is diverted even from dreadful situations whenever we do a work, which we enjoy the most i-e in case of Morgan, he uses singing to divert his attention when he is afraid from death. V.S Pritchett has used figurative and versified language to beautify his work and elaborate his themes.

3. The Analysis

3.1 Phonological Features

Mental activities and exact feelings of characters are described through phonological features in the story "The Voice". For example,

Onomatopoeia is applied in the description of "The Voice" to make it clear and lively.

- "Morgan"! He said in a low voice. Then he called out more loudly "Morgan"!

In this sentence by speaking slowly and loudly respectively, feelings and mental condition of

Lewis is shown.

- I am falling. Help me. Shouted Lewis in terror.
- “Morgan”! He shouted, “Can you hear”?

Here ‘shouting’ represents Lewis’ fear.

- How did you get in! Lewis said sharply from the whole.

‘Sharply’ represents Lewis’ rage in this sentence.

- ‘Haven’t you ever felt rotten with fear’, said the old man calmly.

Here, ‘calmly’ shows Morgan’s inner satisfaction.

Pritchett applies other phonological features like assonance, consonance, alliteration and repetition etc to beautify his work.

Consonance is the repetition of consonant sounds at the end of the words in a sentence. For example,

- Men have been striking their lives working and digging for hours.

In this sentence \ŋ\ is repeated thrice. It’s a consonance.

- The Tickk-lockk of the word went on.

\k\ is consonance in this statement.

- I locked up att eightt o clock lastt nightt.

Here, \t\ sound is a consonance and is repeated for four times.

- Not thatt I’ve gott anything againstt.

Consonance \t\ is repeated.

Alliteration is a repetition of initial consonant sounds in two or more words in a sentence. For example,

- For vestry curtain or carpet at the communion rail.

\k\ sound is alliteration as it is repeated thrice.

- They’re having a ruddy row.

\r\ sound is repeated twice in this sentence, it’s also alliteration.

- He found himself handing by both hands over the pit.

\h\ as alliteration, repeated three times.

- The rescue workers were digging again.

\w\ is alliteration in this sentence.

Assonance is the repetition of vowel sound two or more than two words in a sentence. For example,

- Two of the rescuers took up their shovels and **shouted down** to encourage the buried man.

\au\ is assonance in this sentence.

- Who were **near** strained to **hear**?

“ɪər” sound is repeated in this sentence.

- The voice had **not** **stopped** singing.

\ɒ\ is repeated twice.

I’m an old man! Lewis, and **I** can’t stand it; **I**’ve been down here every since the raids go bad.

\aɪ\ assonance is repeated thrice.

3.2 Graphological Features

Graphological features applied in the story are punctuation; full stop (.) 186 times, comma (,) 93 times, apostrophe (‘) 41 times, inverted commas (“”) 161 times, question mark (?) 18 times and exclamation mark (!) 7 times.

Another excessively used graphological feature is ‘contracted form’. For example they’re, shan’t, haven’t, wouldn’t, can’t, it’s, who’s, you’ve, he’s etc

These contracted forms are used for the economy of space and time.

Capitalization is used for two times in the story. For example,

- *A Message.*

Capitalization is used here to emphasize the word “A MESSAGE”. It shows the importance of word “the message”. It is a deviation.

- Oh **T**hou whose **V**oice the waters heard, and hushed their saying at **T**hy **W**ord.

The capitalization in this statement is not a deviation on the part of writer. It is the norm of language as these words referred to The Lord, who is a supernatural force.

3.3 Lexical Features

Pritchett has used complex and plentiful words. The story is combination of common and uncommon words, shorter and longer words. The shortest word is comprised of a single alphabet. For example ‘A’ and these are 86 in number. While the longest word is comprised of 13 alphabet i-e ‘Extraordinary’ and it is present in the story for one time.

Complex words like,

- Smouldering cloth,
- Decayed tooth,
- Unfrocked priest.

They are used to express the themes of the story and inner mental activities and feelings of characters. They also beautify the language of story.

For a few times the writer has deviated from the norms of language to create the uniqueness and newness in his work. Three types of lexical deviations are present in the story.

3.3.1 Contraction

Words are contracted for the economy of space and time. This style is used mostly in speaking but Pritchett has applied it in writing. For example,

They're, in the place of 'they are', shan't, in the place of 'shall not', haven't, in the place of 'have not', wouldn't, in the place of 'would not' can't, is used for 'cannot', it's, is used for 'it is' who's, is used instead of 'who is', and you've has used for 'you have'.

3.3.2 Neologism

Neologism is the formation of new words, which are used for the first time in a text and not applicable in the language normally. Pritchett has neologized three such words:

- Tick-lock,
- Alter-table,
- Cake-walk.

3.3.3 Functional Conversion

In functional conversion, noun is used as a verb or a verb is used as a noun. Example of functional conversion of this story is

- "Caked on his face"

Here, word 'cake' that is noun is used as a verb, though there could be used word "flowed" in place of caked. But writer has preferred 'caked' to give rich expression.

3.4 Syntactic Feature

The syntactic features of the story are of both types, short as well as long. The shortest sentence in the story is only of one word; for example,

- "Morgan".

Longest sentence in the story is comprised of 65 words. For example,

- But this did not prevent the old man with saintly white head and the eyes half closed by the worldly juices of food and wine, for walking about dressed in his vestments, like an actor walking in the sun of his own vanity, a hook-nosed satyr, a he-goat

significant to servant girls, the crony of the public-house, the chaser of bookmakers, the smoker of cigars.

It is a combination of narration and dialogues. The story opens with narration and further continues in both the narration and dialogues. The language is a bit difficult and not easy to be understood. It is featured by a formal style. Complex phrases, clauses and sentences are used frequently.

3.5 Semantic Features

In the story, many figures of speech are used to accomplish the semantic expressions. Personification is a typical rhetorical device in fairy tales. In this story, the pigeon just symbolizes the omen of release. Furthermore, Pritchett also applies similes and metaphors excessively which make the language diversified and beautiful. Here lists some examples excerpted from this story to illustrate the similes and metaphors.

3.5.1 Similes

- It was destroyed like a decayed tooth.
- A voice like a tree.
- He was scratching like a dog or a rabbit.
- Small man grubbing like a monkey.

3.5.2 Metaphors

Lewis calls Morgan “devil” again and again. ‘Devil’ is metaphorically used here to show Lewis’ biasness against Morgan.

3.6 Morphological Features

V.S Pritchett has created new words from existing ones through word formation. For example,

- Worldly from world.
- Nearest from near.

Three types of word formation are found in this story;

3.6.1 Affixation

It is the formation of new words by joining free morphemes and bound morphemes. For example,

- Quietness (suffix; ‘ness’)
- Dryly (suffix; ‘ly’)
- Unwound (prefix; ‘un’)
- Unlike (prefix; ‘un’)

- Unmistakable (prefix; ‘un’ and suffix; ‘able’)
- Unfrocked (prefix; ‘un’ suffix; ‘ed’)

3.6.2 Compounding

Compounding is to combine free morphemes to make new words. For example,

- Eyelashes
- Bookmaker
- Clergyman

3.6.3 Hyphenation

Hyphenation is formation of new words by joining free morphemes through hyphens. For example,

- He-goat
- Cake-walk
- Tick-tack
- Altar-table
- Hymn-board

4. Conclusion

With all evidences listed above we may conclude that V.S Pritchett has used well refined, appropriate and figurative language to clarify the themes and subjects of his story and beautify of his writing. He expressed the feelings of his character very artistically through personification, metaphors and adjectives etc. there is a delicate harmony between the language and the themes of the story.

The choice of words by the author plays very significant role in meaning making. Such type of analysis makes the message or intention of the writer clear to the readers. And it brings the reader nearer to the writer.

Most important aim of this analysis is its application in pedagogy. Through the analysis of literary texts in this way, subjects like phonology, grammar, lexicology, graphology etc can be taught more easily and effectively in a second language learning classroom.

References

Greet E. Booji. (2007). *The grammar of words: An introduction to Linguistic Morphology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Haynes, J. (1989). *Introducing Stylistics*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Lawal, R. A. (1997). Pragmatics in Stylistics: A speech Act Analysis of Soyinka’s Telephone Conversation. In R. A. Lawal (Ed.) *Stylistics in theory and practice*, Ilorin: Paragon Books.

Leech, G. (1969). *A linguistic guide to English Poetry*. London: Longman

Lodge, K. (2009). *A critical introduction to Phonetics*. London: Continuum.

Tallerman, M. (1998). *Language in literature: An introduction to Stylistics*. London: Hodder.

Weinreich, U (1966). Exploration and Semantic theory. In T.A Sebeok (Ed). *Current trends in linguistics*, 3. The Hague: Moulton, pp. 395-477

Widdowson, H.G. (1975). *Stylistics and the teaching of literature*. London: Longman.