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ALI Furqan Syed
Lecturer, The University of
Lahore, Sargodha Campus,
Pakistan.

Muntazir Ahmad
M. Phil Scholar, The
University of Lahore,
Sargodha Campus, Pakistan.

Muhammad Javed Waseem
M. Phil Scholar, The
University of Lahore,
Sargodha Campus, Pakistan.

Saira Sajid
Lecturer, University of
Education, Joharabad
Campus, Pakistan.

Muhammad Ali Shahid
Principal, The Hope College of
Science & Management
Sillanwali, Sargodha, Pakistan.

Correspondence:
ALI Furqan Syed
Lecturer, The University of
Lahore, Sargodha Campus,
Pakistan.

Stylistic Analysis of Maya Angelou's Poem "When Great Trees Fall"

ALI Furqan Syed, Muntazir Ahmad, Muhammad Javed Waseem, Saira Sajid, Muhammad Ali Shahid

Abstract

Stylistic analysis of the poem helps the readers delve deep in between the lines to have a better understanding of the poem and the deep-seated intention of the poet in writing the poem. The aim of the study was to analyze the poem, "When Great Trees Fall" by Maya Angelou from stylistic point of view. Graphological and phonological levels of stylistic analysis were identified from the poem. Furthermore, the study was to describe the importance of literary techniques used in the poem. Analysis and discussion of the poem has resulted in that the poem is full of the emotions of death, sorrow, violence, depression and dejection. The stylistic analysis of the poem provides a logical and scholarly understanding of the poem. Future implications of the research are: it would be beneficial for the scholars, researcher and the students of literature and linguistics as it will enhance the insight in concerning linguistic competence of the keen learners.

Keywords: Stylistics, Graphological level, Phonological level, linguistic competence

1. Introduction

Stylistic analysis was used before 20th century to analyze the literary text only but since the beginning of 20th century stylistic analysis was applied on non-literary text like newspapers and magazines. The study of style in text is done through this branch of applied linguistics. The style is used to interpret the text besides to describe the formal features of text. The oral and written texts are studied in stylistics. Jaafar (2014) defines the stylistics in her research article "A Stylistic Analysis of Two Selected Poems" published in Journal of College of Education for Women in 2004, as per Widdowson (1975):

"The study of discourse in the perspective of linguistic orientation is stylistics. Stylistics and literary criticism are poles apart from each other in characteristics at one hand and on the other hand is works as a bridge to join them as evident from the morphology of the word stylistics which proclaims style in relation with the former and 'istics' concerning to the later."

Coyle et. al. (1993) add stylistics was mostly done in poetry in the very begging as it required much to extensive explanation both for the formalism and structuralism. Phonetic and grammatical structure was emphasized in linguistics and that can easily be applied on poetry. Stylistics is one of the branches of applied linguistics that is used not only to interpret all type of texts and the linguistics but also the tonal action of all spoken languages is discussed. Different individuals use particular variety of language is in different physical settings. Stylistics is a part of Linguistics which represents the broader discipline; to help the readers for the discovery of the hidden clues about the language; and to understand the entire text by putting it into smaller parts that can easily be understood. The meaning of a certain literary work can be interpreted through the help of stylistic devices. According to the concept of Short and Candlin (1989), "study of literary texts a linguistic approach is called stylistics". Style according to Chaika (1982) the messages the words that are not conveyed easily. There is no concern with what has been said but the main concern is that how a speaker or writer says. Each style is used to produce certain aesthetic effect in a literature.

1.1. Research Statement

The purpose of the study is to identify the literary techniques used in Maya Angelou's poem "When Great Trees Fall". The research is about the "Death" as it brings despair and misery in its wake. Through the technique of stylistics, the poem was analyzed by delving deep into Graphological and Phonological levels.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate graphological aspects of the poem "When Great Trees Fall"
2. To investigate phonological aspects of the poem "When Great Trees Fall"

1.3. Research Questions

1. What are the graphological aspects in the poem "When Great Trees Fall"?
2. What are the phonological aspects in the poem "When Great Trees Fall"?

1.4. Importance of the Study

Recently, where linguistics is growing with a rapid speech in the field of literature on a larger scale, the stylistic analysis is excessively being used to deal with the literary techniques and figures of speech to understand the intention of the poet. Stylistic analysis helps the reader to reveal the true meaning garbed in figurative language used by the poet.

We can say that stylistic is used as a bridge to link the field of literature with linguistics, thus it has great importance in the field of literature. The significance of this research study is to analyze the tools of stylistics and their practical application in poetry that will surely help the readers as well as the students who are connected with English language and literature. As the title suggests, the research study under consideration focuses on the linguistic aspects of the poems through stylistic analysis. Furthermore, it is expected that the Stylistic approach used in this research will help the future researchers to do the stylistic analysis of any literary work in the form of poetry.

1.5. Title of Poem

In this poem falling of trees is metaphorically used to represent the idea of great loss, misery and disease. When someone dies and leave many people for crying behind him/her. The process of running of the animals is symbolized with the people when they try to find a place of shelter in the form of support from someone to decrease their sorrow after the death of their dear ones. Overall the discussion of the poem is about the Death.

1.6. Theme of Poem

One of the most important themes presented in the poem is death. Death of the beloved one is described through the presentation of the fall of Great Tree. It is about the discussion of the loss we have to face in the form of death of the person who has great influence in our live. We are unable to bear the pain of their departure.

1.7. Delimitations

Due to the shortage of time and according to the requirement of the study, only one poem of Maya Angelou sty, "When Great Trees Fall" has been selected for stylistic analysis. Furthermore, the study has been restricted to only

two levels of stylistic analysis i.e., graphological and phonological levels to achieve the objectives of the study and to make the study more effective for language and literature learners.

2. Review of related Literature

There are many articles, books and texts that deal with the stylistic analysis of different texts especially related to the poems of different poets. In this research work, we come to the facts about the importance of words for the poets garbed in hidden meanings. The words describe the purpose of the poet to write the poem and his intention can be clearly judged by his using of words of language. Poet's personality depicts from his writing style. Poetic and non-poetic language can be differentiated through the writing style of the poets. The poet's manipulation of the language differentiates the poetry from the ordinary language. The research deals with the usage of different languages by the poets. Stylistic analysis explores the writing style of the both poems. Recurrent features of stylistics have been discussed in the research thoroughly. More suitable words are used in these poems to convey the real message of the poets.

Before proceeding towards the stylistic analysis of the poems there is a complete discussion about the stylistics and its level and elements include in it so that it will be easy for the reader to understand the purpose of the research.

2.1. The concept of Style

We can define the term "Style" with different meanings they may me in and outside the literary text. Without knowing the meanings of style in a proper way, this term cannot be used in an appropriate manner with effect. The style can also be referred as a manner, a way or a particular procedure for doing something. The thoughts of a person's mind are reflected through the style any writer adopts. The way of speaking and writing of person can also be judged by the writer style thus we can say that style shows the personality of a person. Style involves both types speaking and writing that includes literary and non-literary language. It is raftered particularly towards the literary text in written form. As said by Widdowson (1975) from linguistics orientation the study of literary discourse is called stylistics. According to Leech (1969) the way of speaking, writing and to perform something is called style. In it the wording, sentence structure and the style of speaker is discussed. According to Chapman (1973) in a certain recurring situation a number of people commonly adopt a register that is called style of writing. Between language-users of a common in relation to the product of social situation is called style.

2.2. The Concept of Stylistics

According to Coyle & et.al (1993) in starting work of stylistics was mostly done on poetry because poetry was required too much detail and to build on poetry the formalist and structuralist work was easy to done. Phonetic and grammatical structure was emphasized in linguistics and that can be easily applied as a result on poetry. Stylistics is one of the branches of applied linguistics that is used to interpret all type of texts and the linguistics and tonal style of all spoken languages is discussed. Different individuals use particular variety of language and their use

is in different situation or has different settings. Stylistics is a part of Linguistics which represents the broader discipline. Stylistics is used to help the readers for the discovery of the hidden clues about the language. Stylistics is used to understand the entire text by putting it into smaller parts that can be easily understood. The meaning of a certain literary work can be interpreted through the help of stylistics. According to the concept of Short and Candlin (1989) to study of literary texts a linguistic approach is called stylistics. Definition of style according to Chaika (1982) in words the messages are not normally conveyed easily. There is no concern with what has been said but the main concern is that how a speaker or writer says. Each style is used to produce certain aesthetic effect in a literature.

According to the Simpson (2004) Stylistics has different levels given below:

2.2.1. Phonetic or Phonological level:

In this level of stylistics, the examination of sounds is done. The phonetic level also uses for studying potential utility of sounds and its characteristics. The sound system of a given language is studied in phonological level of stylistics. It is also called as the study of the formal rules of pronunciation.

2.2.2. Graphological level:

According to the concept of Khan and Jabeen, (2015) in a writing system of a language the analogous study is done in a Graphological level of stylistics. In this level the written language's pattern and on the page shape of language is discussed.

2.2.3. Morphological level:

In this level of stylistics, the construction of words is studied. Also this level deals with the constituent structures of the words.

2.2.4. Syntax or Grammatical level:

The discussion syntactic and morphological levels, is done in grammatical level of stylistics. Main purpose of this level is the analysis of the internal structure of sentences. Through the process of foregrounding and the deviation grammatical level is gone through. In this level sentences and phrases are formed by combining words with other words.

2.2.5. The lexical level:

The elements on the word levels are discussed in lexical level of stylistics analysis. This level deal with the use of words or it can be referred towards the vocabulary of under use language.

2.2.6. The Semantic level:

In this level sentences and words are dealt with their meanings. To understand the meanings of the given words or sentence this level is studied.

2.2.7. The Pragmatic or Discourse Analysis level:

This level is concerned with the use of words and expressions in everyday context. In context meaning of language is studied in this level.

3. Analysis of the poem "When Great Trees Fall"

As a human being we often experience loss in our lives. It proves a source of despair and misery. Loss can be considering as red as an open wound that cannot be easily healed and memories proves to re-open that wound again and again. When we closely analyzed the text of the poem "Death is Nothing at All" we see that memories and regret of loss have been discussed in the poem. Through this poem Maya Angelou has tried to identify the speaker who is sharing the grief of his death and the pain they are feeling after losing him. This poem is clearly about the discussion of the death and the pain caused by the death. In this poem the speaker of the poem is effectively identifying the feelings of deep loss and anguish but also trying as well as through her powerful words she is offering hope for healing that great loss. With the help of simple style of syntax and diction used by the poet we can clearly understand the general mood of the text. In the starting mood shows the moments of despair and depression but with the development of the poem it transforms to the feelings of hope and peace that has been provided by the poet. We can get that Maya Angelou much too concerned about the topic of the poem. In between the lines of the poem, Maya Angelou used the tone that is well considered, gentle and calm in nature to explain her point of view about death. This poem "When Great Trees Fall" is about losing loved one in your life and it discussed the pain caused faced by the people on departing from each other. In the starting of the poem we see that Maya Angelou has used an extended metaphor that is describing the natural scene. In that natural scene there is a discussion about the reaction of animals on the moment when "great tress falls," because in that situation animals hide themselves and run here and there to save their lives and "lumber after safety". We see that metaphorically the fall of powerful and large trees in the forest is compared with the death of loved one when they depart from us. With this example we clearly understand that how beautifully May Angelou has applied the literary terms to make her work attractive for the readers. With the progress of the theme, the poem directly shifts on the topics of "great souls" and the reaction of human beings on that loss. In "The Republic of Poetry" (2014), Kim Fahner has praised about the poem "When Great Trees Falls" by considering it brilliant in terms of its structure and with respect the meaning, the poem is also of great magnitude. According to him, this poem is a source of comfort for you after losing someone who is very near to you. In the third stanza of the poem there is a feeling of people on suddenly loosing someone. Further poem is about the discussion on one's inability in taking breath and the impact of one's memory on the people left behind him/her. In the end of the poem there is a message that includes hope and renewal that provides the suggestions on the death of loved one's that after death we have a chance to become more powerful and strong. This poem "When Great Trees Fall" by Maya Angelou consists of five stanzas. The stanzas of the poems are divided into uneven sets of lines. The stanzas consist of minimum 5 lines and maximum fourteen lines. Poem is without any specific rhyme scheme or metrical pattern. Through the use of several poetic techniques Maya Angelou has made this poem too much attractive and different from others as these are helpful in unifying the text of the poem and is creating a feeling of rhythm and rhyme. The poem has figurative language in the form of metaphors, alliteration, enjambment and repetition.

4. Stylistic Analysis of the poem

The poem has been written in 'vers libre' which is otherwise called free verse type of poem. It doesn't utilize steady meter examples, rhyme, or any melodic example. The same is the case with the poem under analysis in this study. No rhyming scheme is used by the poet in this poem as last word of each line is totally different from the others and there is no specific pattern of meter followed in the poem as each stanza of poem is of different length.

While doing analysis of the poem "When Great Trees Fall", only Graphological and Phonological levels have observed by the researcher.

4.1. Phonological Level

a. Alliteration:

Many examples of alliteration can be trace in the poem as in stanza no. 2 **F**all, **F**orest, **S**ilence, **S**enses, **B**reathe, **B**riefly; in stanza No. 2 **S**uddenly, **S**harpener; in Stanza No.4 **M**uch, **M**addened, **C**old, **C**aves; and in Stanza No.5 **P**eriod, **P**eace, **B**e, **B**e. All the letters in **Bold** form are the examples of alliteration.

b. Consonance:

A sentence with the repetition of final consonants but has different preceding vowels. Within a sentence or phrase consonants produced the repetitive sound that is called Consonance. Examples: trees, forests, things, senses, souls, becomes, briefly, **br**iefly, **un**said, **prom**ised, **form**ed, **inform**ed,

c. Assonance:

Repetition is found of vowel words that are nearly related with each other, that repetition is called Assonance that creates musical color. When, great trees, distant hills, tall grasses, even elephants, lumber after safety, recoil into silence, their senses beyond, fear sterile, breathe, briefly, eyes, suddenly sharpened, takes leave, maddened, reduced to the unutterable ignorance, period, peace, senses, restored, never, same, whisper, they existed, we, be, better and existed. The all underlined letter in bold form are the examples of assonance.

4.2. Graphological Level

Wales (2014) expressed, "graphology is alluded to the composing arrangement of a language, as showed in handwriting and typography; and to the next related highlights noted in for example capitalization and punctuation".

i. Capitalization:

The words with capital letters in the poem express the stress and priority of the following words and phrases. First of all, the capitalization used in the title of the poem 'When Great Leaves Fall', the significance of the title can be measure from the use of title in the very lines of the first two stanzas. It intensifies the theme of death from the very inception. Other words and phrase with capitalization are: 'Our eye' and 'Our memory' in the third stanza, "Great souls", "Our minds", and pronoun 'We' in the fourth stanza, and in the fifth and final stanza "Our sense", 'We can be and Be and be' are the cynosure of the study which aggravate the gloominess of theme in the poem.

ii. Punctuation:

The poem has been written in free very style: without any specific meter and rhyme scheme. What attracts the attention of the read is the use of punctuation in the poem.

a. Full stops: 17 times

As the poem has been written in run-on lines, random full stop in the poem has been used at 17 places to express the completeness of the sense. Anyhow, the uneven use of full stop in between the lines the manifest the sudden halt and slowness which are the evidence of gloom prevailed in the poem. As we see the random use of in the following lines in bold letters. Full-stop is used at the end of most lines to give complete sense and each stanza.

b. Commas: 27 times

In the poem comma is used for 27 times to indicate the short pause. The sentential elements in the poems are also separated through the use of commas. In this poem, the excessive use of commas breaks the natural flow of speech to slowness which means as journey from life to death.

Conclusion

To probe in between the lines what the poet intends to say and convey to the readers, stylistic analysis of the poem 'When Great Leave Fall' has been done through the lens of levels of stylistic analysis presented by Paul Simpson. Anyhow, only two levels: Graphological level and Phonological level were used by the researcher to achieve the objectives of the study. Both levels revealed the ideas of the poet garbed in literary techniques. Concept of death and the reality of the death have been presented by the poet in her own writing style. As the main concern of the research was the stylistic analysis of the poem, so going through the stylistic analysis we find the way of presenting ideas by the poet.

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