Stylistics Analysis of Niyi Osundare's Poem "The Rain Song"

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Abstract

Language unarguably is an important tool of literature. For proper understanding of any literary text, a discourse of the language of a text becomes imperative because it enhances in dept knowledge of such text. Thus, linguistic features of a text caters for an overall comprehension the context of such a literary studies. As a matter of fact, a critic must necessarily have deep knowledge of any literary text so as to be able to understand and analyse it. Based on this premise that this paper attempts to give scholarly analysis of Niyi Osundare's poem, "The Rain song". It is necessary to use these linguistic features that are often applied to the interpretation and synthesis of non prosaic literary genre specifically poetry. Based on the foregoing analysis. This work opines that the application of these linguistic approaches to the analysis of this literary work will help us to appreciate creativity and understand the linguistic style as used in any literary text. The linguistic tools applied in this work reveals that Niyi Osundare's Rainsong" has a strong message beyond the surface meaning. The rainsong is meant to show the effect of rain to mankind with profuse use of imageries which is highlighted in the stylistic analysis of the poem.

Key words: Stylistics, rain song, analysis, poem, discourse.

Introduction:

Language has been given different definitions by several scholars. Traditionally, language is simply considered as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by which thought is communicated from one human being to another. Language and literature plays a symbiotic role. Language is a property of literature and literature uses language in special ways in order to achieve certain desired effects. Thus, these "special ways" given clues on the effect literature has on the language it uses. The linguistic deviation in literature implies that, "literature uses expressions that are different from everyday speech literatures unite the knot by assembling arbitrary linguistic devices such as sounds, imageries, orthographies, rhythm, rhyme, metre and other forms of literary devices for a special use in the process of analyzing a literary discourse.

These "special linguistic tools" which the writers use to distinguish literary language from the other forms of discourse make a literary work quite difficult. Eagleton (1998:120) opines that under pressure to deliver a message with these devices, ordinary language is intensified, condensed, twisted, telescoped, drawn, out and turned on its head". The implication of these scenario is that ordinary situations, objects and persons are made strange and unfamiliar. These of course lead to different perceptions and interpretations of a literary genre.

Literature, through language, renews and reshapes our perception of estranging and alienating ordinary speech; and in doing so, paradoxically brings the reader into a fuller and more intimate possession of experience and world view. This deviation of language is of special kind; for in spite of it, literature still recognizes and identifies with the norms which it serves. literature appreciates the fact that there exist different levels of linguistic behaviour even within the normal language groups. The implication of this is the fact that just as ordinary language behaviour consists of a highly complex range of discourse distinguished according to class, region, gender, status, educational background, sex and roles which are neathy unified in a linguistic community. Apparently, literature recognizes and takes care of these linguistic deviations.

Every literary genres determines its linguistic features and deviations from the normal linguistic form. In all of these genres. Poetry uses language profusely which is quite and specifically different from the other genres. The language of poetry consists of rhymic, pattern, metres, verses and provoking thoughts that appeal strongly to the imagination. Poetry portrays an experience in well condensed form in which words are arranged in a pattern or format. It also employs deviations in the repetition of sentences, phrases, words for the purpose of emphasis. Poetry makes significant use of imageries, symbols, metaphors euphemism etc. These devices enrich poetry as one of the genres that possesses aesthetic ornaments. Olorunleke (1997:45) "A poet or artist cannot theme or subject matter and other devices. If he does, he will come up with something unnatural, unrealistic and downright phony".

One significant thing about poetry is that it creates unified form that is moving and pleasing. When these linguistic tools are mastered as basis for the analysis of the language in poetry, the work of poetry becomes much more pleasing and easier to approach.

Theoretical Framework

The relationship between linguistics and literature, and the influences of linguistics on literature has been one of the most widely discussed issues in literary studies of modern times. This is a consequence of a major development in both literary practice and in the study of language. What is responsible for this development is due to the special character of the theory of language. The linguistic theories are so powerful that the impact of modern linguistic theories on literary studies has not been limited to problems of literary language alone but has produced theories about the nature, and organization of literature and indeed about social and cultural life.

Ferdinand De Saussure theory of sign created the basic of structuralism, both in linguistics and as a more broadly based movement of thought in which all forms of social and cultural life are seen to be governed by system of signs (Jefferson and Robey 1988:46). Another breakthrough in linguistics that has contributed to studies and analysis of poetry is said to be essay titled, "Aesthetic function, Norm and value as social facts". Jan Mukarosvsky (1970:70) declares that poetry should be viewed as evidence of semiotic being". The implication of this exploration is that, artistic works constitute particular kinds of signs which can only be understood within the framework of a general sign theory.

These suggestions, according to Jefferson and Robey (1988:53) provide the basis for a theory of poetic meaning which distinguishes its meaning from the external world and relates it to it. This is because if a literary text is seen as sign or set of signs in the Saussuran sense, then, its meaning or content must be the product of a structure of relationships or differences whose connection with the "real" world is purely arbitrary. Jeyifo (1985:40) observes that literary meaning must therefore be analysed as a semantic composition and not as a reflection of its external features. By implication, Yankson (1972:12) sums up this argument by describing poetry (literature) as our everyday world enclosed in a "prison house" of language. Jefferson and Robey (1988) affirmed that what literary genres like poetry do therefore is to free us from this "prison house" by subverting conventional sign systems, thereby forcing us to focus our attention on signs themselves rather than taking them for granted.

The creative artist expresses his sensations, perceptions, theories etc primarily by means of language. For Yankson (2006:10), he remarked that "creative artists are noted for deliberately breaching the language code, for stylistic effect. Bradford (1997) explained that in the 20th Century, Ferdinand de Saussure's indebt studies in linguistic provided the basis for modern ideas about language and reality. Saussure's most applied concept was his distinction between the signified and the signifier. For Saussure, the signifier is the concrete linguistic sign, spoken or written and the signified is the concept represented by the sign. A third element is the referent, the paralinguistic object or condition that stands beyond the signifier and signified relationships.

Jefferson and Robery (1988:70) posited that, "modern models of language from Saussure offer the possibility of describing the linguistic features of text for more coherent than the way traditional grammar ever did. The modern linguistic use of linguistic tools to analyse literary work since the verbal message of a work of art is an integral part of linguistics.

Bradford (1997) while citing Wordsworth sees language as integral to poetry. Alexander Pope emphasizes the poetic form just as James Relves sees both theme and form as inseparable component. William Wordsworth in his poetic theory, "Preface to Lyrical ballads." Emphasized both content and form. He defines poetry as", the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling recollected in tranquillity. Alexander Pope sees poetry as craft and the poet as a craftsman. Thus, poems remain one of the efforts of man to make life worth living. In poetry, the poet expresses himself using the techniques and features of language such as tone, meter, rhythm, and other figurative expressions in order to evoke feelings or persuade the readers. Dada (2004) observes that the duty of stylistician is to use linguistic features to single out the distinctive features in an author's work in order to make the text better and quite understanding.

Stylistic analysis provides the basis that poems constantly create a continuous level of interference between poetic forms (metre, rhyme, assonance and alliteration) and the practical, non-poetic registers of syntax and semantics. Literary stylistics shifts the centre of attention from the situation of the utterance to the words of the text. This aspect of criticism interferes with and clarifies perceived images of poetic situation, context and phrasal meaning. It has become important to restate that when we apply stylistics to the study of poetry, we examined linguistic features such as sounds and rhythm among other linguistic elements, examining their

principled characteristics features that form the body of a poetic text devoid of contextual or situational meaning.

In this regard, stylistics is concerned not only with the identification of these linguistic features that set apart poetic discourses from other linguistic instances, but with poetry as form of signification which mysteriously transforms the familiar relationship between languages and meaning. Poet and literary critics Bradford (1997:20) views poetry as being "unlike any other assembly of words which supplements the use of grammar and syntax with another system of organization: the poetic line. A stylistician employ linguistic tools to project the differences that exist between poetry and ordinary language. Yankson (2006:60) remarks that", stylistics analysis is an attempt to create patterns within a text which isolate that text from the normal cause and effect relationship between language and its context.

The Conceptual view of Cohesion and Foregrounding

Halliday and Hassan (1976) consider cohesion as a way in which independent choices in different point of a text correspond with one another. Consequently, when words, sentences and phrases or sound are patterned together to allow us have a sequence of thought, it is a case of cohesion. This patterning, after stylistic analysis, yields a fuller and better understanding of the poetic discourse. Halliday and Hassan (1976:107) considered cohesion as, "a linguistic means by which a text functions as a single unit". A text could be tied together by cohesive devices which could be grammatical or lexical.

In principles of literary criticism, Bradford (1997:23) adds, "rhythm and metre as other important elements to be considered in textual studies of poetic discourses". Though his concern is the psychological effects of poetry on the reader; as a result, he fails to analyse the textual means by which its effect is achieved. In spite of this shortcoming, Bradford' attempt has given rise to series of studies and analysis of poetic discourse on the premise of their distinctive textual qualities. It is based on these views that led to the emergence of cohesion as one of the linguistics principles used in criticism of poetry.

On the other hand, foregrounding is said to have been developed by Tynyanov as a consequence of the view that a literary text is a system composed of interacted and interacting elements which are either dominant or atomized. Most of the time, creative writers structure their words, phrases and sentences in such a way that these expressions attract sustained attention. Yankson (1987:23) posited, "there may be the violation of category rules, the breach of sectional restriction rules and repetition of grammatical pattern. Foregrounding brings the message of a text to what Yankson calls the forecourt of the readers' attention. One of the functions of poetic language is the maximum foregrounding of the utterance. Once linguistic item is given prominence, it attracts readers' attention.

Stylistics Analysis of Niyi Osundare's, "The Raining"

Sample: Data

The Rain song

The sky carries a boil of anguish
Let it burst
Lot it rain
That parched throats may sing
Let it rain
That earth may heal her silence
Let it rain today
That corn leaves may cloth the hills
Let it rain
That roots may swell the womb of lying plains
Let it rain today
That stomachs may shun the rumble of thunder

Let it rain
That children may bath and bawl and brawl
The sky carries a boil of anguish
Let it burst.

Application of Stylistic Tools for the Analysis of Niyi Osundare's "The Rainsong"

An analysis of Niyi osundares, "Rainsong shall be based on these stylistic tools which will help us to unravel the unique features of the poem. The tools include: the graphological, phonological, syntactic and lexical items.

Graphological feature: There is absence of punctuation marks in the poem. This makes the ideas flows with one another forming a network of sequential relations. The non existence of punctuation mark is a sort of deviation. It shows that the poem is meant to be sung. The most distinct graphological feature in this poem is the linear arrangement of the poem in contrast to paragraphing in prose. There are no stanzas in the poem but a free verses containing is lines.

Phonological features: A considerable knowledge of phonology is required for a good analysis of a poem. The most prominent feature of the poem is its repetition of lexical items in lines 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 13. Because of mare repetitions in these aforementioned lines, it maintains a rhyming scheme of abab cdcd. Another foregrounded element is the profuse use of personification let us consider the following lines:

The sky carries a boil of anguish (line 1)
That parched throat may sing (line 4)
That earth may heal her silence (line 6)
That core leaves may cloths the hills (line 8)
That roots may swell the womb of lying plain (line 10)
That stomach may shun the rumble of thunder (line 12)
That children may bath and bowl and brawl (line 14)
The sky carries a boil of anguish (line 15)

All these personifications as used by the poet make the rhythmic pattern of the poem quite fascinating. It creates aesthetics craftsmanship.

Syntactic Features

The poem is composed in a simple and straightforward language. It can be read by children because it is composed in form of a song. This is shown in the refrains – let it rains from lines 2 to 14. The inclusion of subordinate clause, "That" makes it a far more complete expression. This makes the meaning of the poem quite explicit. The poet also uses modal auxiliary verbs from line 6 through line 14. For instance,

May heal (line 6)
May clothe (line 8)
May swell (line 10)
May shun (line 12)
May bath bawl and brawl (line 14)

The disjointedness of syntax is occasionally used to demonstrate the disjointedness of human thought be the stream of consciousness.

Lexico-Semantic Features

There exists patterns of certain lexical items in the poem that share same semantic features for instance, lines 2 and 3 i.e.

Lt it rains
Let it bursts

They share same semantic features. This can also be referred to as parallelism. Similarly words like "parched" (line 5), "heal" (line 6) "clothes" (line 8), "smell" (line 10) share same semantic features. The bound between the lexical items makes them to stand firmly and provide the

reader a deeper plane of interpretation. The deliberate use of imagines is meant to show the effect of rain to humankind. The use of the imageries like:

Parched threat (line 4)

The womb of lying plains (line 10)

The rumble of thunder (line 12)

A boil of anguish (line 16)

Those expressions bring to prominence the process of defamiliarization making the words emphatic items and ascribing them a different meaning.

Conclusion

In all literary genres, the language often used in poetry is quite different from other genres because poems use smaller words to convey didactic and anecdote messages. Analysis of Niyi Osundare's poem, "The Rain Song based on stylistic features within the poem has rendered its interpretation so simple and its meanings manifest easily. This has enable us appreciate aesthetic devices and contextual norms embedded in the poem. Thus, the best way of subjecting literary discourse to linguistic principle is by using these stylistic tools for understanding of the poetic discourse. As linguistic tools, its application in a literary genre like poetry enables us to appreciate the power of language use and expression. It can also be applied in all other literary works because style defines a writer.

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