



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE CODE: ENG 434

COURSE TITLE: LITERARY STYLISTICS

**COURSE
GUIDE**

**ENG 434
LITERARY STYLISTICS**

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Introduction

The aim of this course is to introduce you to the theory and practice of stylistics. It is structured into five modules of twenty- one units. Module 1 which is entitled “Style and Stylistics” provides you with background lectures on the concepts of style and stylistics, the nature and goals of stylistics as well as types of stylistics. Module 2 entitled “Levels of Linguistic Analysis” takes you through the essential levels of linguistic description of a text. These include the phono- graphological, the syntactic and the lexico-semantic levels. It also introduces you to cohesion and coherence as well as foregrounding.

The title of Module 3 is “Basic Genres of Literature and their Elements”. This is where you will learn about forms of literature, elements of prose, elements of poetry and elements of drama. In Module 4 entitled “The Language of Literature”, you are introduced to the main features of the language of literature- prose, poetry and drama, as well as the elements of register and points of view. In Module 5, which bears the title “Sample Textual Analyses”, you will be exposed to some practical guides in doing a stylistic analysis of prose, poetry and drama. The guides provided here are not exhaustive but they are adequate to stimulate your interest in carrying out a purposeful stylistic analysis of a text.

Course Aim

The general aim of this course is to equip you with the knowledge and skills needed to undertake a meaningful stylistic analysis of any text, especially a literary text. It aims at making you an informed reader/ analyst of a (literary) text.

Course Objectives

Each Unit in the course contains some specific objectives which should guide you. At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- define style and stylistics;
- identify and explain some perspectives on style;

- identify and explain some types of stylistics;
- mention and describe the major levels of linguistic description of a text;
- list the basic genres of literature;
- discuss the elements of each basic genre of literature;
- distinguish between cohesion and coherence;
- explain what foregrounding entails;
- describe the register of a text;
- identify and discuss the point(s) of view adopted in a text; and
- carry out a meaningful stylistic analysis of a text (especially a literary text).

Working through this course

As mentioned earlier, the course contains five modules of twenty- one units which blend theory with practice in the field of stylistics as a major area of language and literature studies. You should painstakingly go through all the units in this course, taking note of the essential concepts introduced to you. You should also do the Self-Assessment Exercises and the Tutor-Marked Assignments. For you to derive maximum benefit from the course, you should consult as many of the references/suggestions for further reading given at the end of each unit.

Course Materials

Your course materials include the study units in the course, the recommended textbooks and the exercises/assignments provided in each unit.

Study Units

There are twenty-one Study Units in the course and you will need between fifteen (15) to twenty (20) weeks to study them thoroughly, working through the exercises/assignments and consulting the recommended texts.

Module 1 STYLE AND STYLISTICS

- Unit 1: The Concepts of Style and Stylistics
- Unit 2: The Nature and Goals of Stylistics
- Unit 3: Types of Stylistics (i)
- Unit 4: Types of Stylistics (ii)

Module 2 LEVELS OF LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

- Unit 1: Levels of Linguistic Analysis (i) (The Phono-graphological Level)
- Unit 2: Levels of Linguistic Analysis (ii) (The Lexico-Semantic Level)
- Unit 3: Levels of Linguistic Analysis (iii) (The Syntactic Level)
- Unit 4: Cohesion and Coherence
- Unit 5: Foregrounding

Module 3 BASIC GENRES OF LITERATURE AND THEIR ELEMENTS

- Unit 1: Forms of Literature
 Unit 2: Elements of Prose
 Unit 3: Elements of Poetry
 Unit 4: Elements of Drama

Module 4 THE LANGUAGE OF LITERATURE

- Unit 1: The Language of Literature (i) (The Language of Prose)
 Unit 2: The Language of Literature (ii) (The Language of Poetry)
 Unit 3: The Language of Literature (iii) (The Language of Drama)
 Unit 4: Elements of Registers
 Unit 5: Points of View

Module 5 SAMPLE TEXTUAL ANALYSES

- Unit 1: A Sample Stylistic Analysis of a Prose Passage
 Unit 2: A Sample Stylistic Analysis of a Drama Passage
 Unit 3: A Sample Stylistic Analysis of a Poem

Course Marking

You will be scored over 10% for each of your best three assignments to arrive at 30% for your Continuous Assessment. The real examination will carry 70%, to give a total of 100%. This is graphically presented in the table below.

Assessment	Marks
Assignments 1-4 (the best three of all the assignments submitted)	Three assignments, marked out of 10% Totalling 30%
Final examination	70% of overall course marks
Total	100% of course marks

Course Overview

Unit	Title of Work	Weeks Activity	Tutor Marked Assignment
	Course Guide	1	
Module 1: STYLE AND STYLISTICS			
1	The Concepts of Style and Stylistics	2	
2	The Nature and Goals of	3	

	Stylistics		
3	Types of Stylistics (i)	4	
4	Types of Stylistics (ii)	5	TMA 1
Module 2: LEVELS OF LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS			
1	Levels of Linguistic Analysis (i) (The Phono-graphological Level)	6	
2	Levels of Linguistic Analysis (ii) (The Lexico-Semantic Level)	7	
3	Levels of Linguistic Analysis (iii) (The Syntactic Level)	8	
4	Cohesion and Coherence	9	
5	Foregrounding	10	TMA 2
Module 3: BASIC GENRES OF LITERATURE AND THEIR ELEMENTS			
1	Forms of Literature	11	
2	Elements of Prose	12	
3	Elements of Poetry	13	
3	Language and Machine	14	
4	Elements of Drama	15	TMA 3
Module 4: THE LANGUAGE OF LITERATURE			
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Module 5: SAMPLE TEXTUAL ANALYSES			
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	Revision	24	
	Examination		

Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials

You are not alone in your journey through this course as there are facilitators and tutors to guide and assist you. You should make sure you exploit this opportunity, especially during tutorials. If you have read the course materials very well, you will be able to identify the issues to be sorted out with your facilitators/ tutors. This simply means that you should not miss your tutorials and you should adequately prepare for them.

Summary

Although this course is an introduction to stylistics, it exposes you to the essentials of linguistic/ literary stylistics. If you carefully go through the course, you will be sure you have a good background in this important aspect of language studies. We wish you happy reading.

**COURSE
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MODULE 1 STYLE AND STYLISTICS

UNIT 1 THE CONCEPTS OF STYLE AND STYLISTICS

Contents

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 - 3.2 Style as Choice
 - 3.3 Style as the Man
 - 3.4 Style as Deviation
 - 3.5 Style as Conformity
 - 3.6 Style as Period or Time
 - 3.7 Style as Situation
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Stylistics, a yoking of style and linguistics, is a discipline which has been approached from many perspectives. Its meaning varies, based on the theory that is adopted. When we carry out the different activities that are connected to our area of business, either in spoken or written forms, we often use devices of thought and the rules of language, but there are variations so as to change meanings or say the same thing in different ways. This is what the concept of style is based upon: the use of language in different ways, all for the purpose of achieving a common goal - to negotiate meanings.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) define style and stylistics;
- (ii) identify and explain at least three perspectives on style;
- (iii) explain stylistics as a multi-dimensional discipline.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

Stylistics is a broad term that has assumed different meanings from different linguistic scholars. But it can simply be said to be the study of style. Style on its own as defined by Lucas (1955:9) is:

the effective use of language, especially in prose, whether to make statements or to rouse emotions. It involves first of all the power to put fact with clarity and brevity.

Style has also been defined as the description and analysis of the variability forms of linguistic items in actual language use. Leech (1969: 14) quotes Aristotle as saying that “the most effective means of achieving both clarity and diction and a certain dignity is the use of altered forms of words.”

Stylistics is also defined as a study of the different styles that are present in either a given utterance or a written text or document. The consistent appearance of certain structures, items and elements in a speech, an utterance or in a given text is one of the major concerns of Stylistics. Stylistics requires the use of traditional levels of linguistic description such as sounds, form, structure and meaning. It then follows that the consistent appearance of certain structures, items and elements in speech utterances or in a given text is one of the major concerns of stylistics. Linguistic Stylistic studies is concerned with the varieties of language and the exploration of some of the formal linguistic features which characterize them. The essence and the usefulness of stylistics is that it enables the immediate understanding of utterances and texts, thereby maximizing our enjoyment of the texts.

The concepts of style and stylistic variation in language are based on the general notion that within the language system, the content can be encoded in more than one linguistic form. Thus, it is possible for it to operate at all linguistic levels such as phonological, lexical and syntactic. Therefore, style may be regarded as a choice of linguistic means, as deviation from the norms of language use, as recurrent features of linguistic forms and as comparisons. Stylistics deals with a wide range of language varieties and styles that that are possible in creating different texts, whether spoken or written, monologue or dialogue, formal or informal, scientific or religious etc.

Again, stylistics is concerned with the study of the language of literature or the study of the language habits of particular authors and their writing patterns. From the foregoing, stylistics can be said to be the techniques of explication which allows us to define objectively what an author has done, (linguistic or non-linguistic), in his use of language. The main aim of stylistics is to enable us understand the intent of the author in the manner the information has been passed across by the author or writer. Therefore, stylistics is concerned with the examination of grammar, lexis, semantics as well as phonological properties and discursive devices. Stylistics is more interested in the significance of function that the chosen style fulfils.

3.2 Style as Choice

While examining the concept stylistics, it is equally essential to give attention to the notion of choice. Choice is a very vital instrument of stylistics since it deals with the variations and the options that are available to an author. Since language provides its users with more than one choice in a given situation, there are different choices available to the writer in a given text. This then depends on the situation and genre the writer chooses in expressing thoughts and opinions. Traugott and Pratt (1980: 29 – 30) clarify

the connection between language and choice as the characteristic choices exhibited in a text.

With the writer's choice, there is a reflection of his ego and the social condition of his environment. In determining the appropriate choice of linguistic elements, two important choice planes are open to the writer: the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic. The paradigmatic axis is also referred to as the vertical or choice axis while the syntagmatic is the horizontal axis. The vertical axis gives a variety of choices between one item and other items; the writer then chooses the most appropriate word. Thus, the paradigmatic axis is able to account for the given fillers that occupy a particular slot while still maintaining the structure of the sentence. At the paradigmatic level, for example, a writer or speaker can choose between "start" and "commence", "go" and "proceed."

3.3 Style as the Man

This is based on the notion that every individual has his or her own unique way of doing things and that no two persons are of exactly the same character. There are always distinctive features that distinguish one person from the other; thus in literary style, one is able to differentiate between the writings of Soyinka and Achebe, based on their use of language, among other things. A person's style may also be shaped by his social and political background, religious inclination, culture, education, geographical location, etc. Simply put, the notion of style as the man sees style as an index of personality. But this perspective is not without its own problems. For example, one may exhibit different styles on different occasions; when this happens, do we say the writer has different personalities?

3.4 Style as Deviation

When an idea is presented in a way that is different from the expected way, then we say such a manner of carrying it out has deviated from the norm. The concept of style as deviation is based on the notion that there are rules, conventions and regulations that guide the different activities that must be executed. Thus, when these conventions are not complied with, there is deviation. Deviation in stylistics is concerned with the use of different styles from the expected norm of language use in a given genre of writing. It is a departure from what is taken as the common practice. Language deviation refers to an intentional selection or choice of language use outside of the range of normal language. Language is a system organized in an organic structure by rules and it provides all the rules for its use such as phonetic, grammatical, lexical, etc. Thus, any piece of writing or material that has intentionally jettisoned the rules of language in some way is said to have deviated. Stylistics helps to identify how and why a text has deviated. Tringott and Pratt (1980: 31) believe that the idea of style as deviance is favoured by the "generative frame of reference." It is an old concept which stems from the work of such scholars as Jan Mukarovsky. Mukarovsky relates style to foregrounding and says that "the violation of the norm of the standard... is what makes possible the poetic utilization of language" (see Tringott and Pratt 1980: 31).

Deviation may occur at any level of language description e.g. phonological, graphological, syntactic, lexico-semantic, etc. At the graphological level, for example, we may see capital letters where they are not supposed to be. At the syntactic level, subject and verb may not agree in number. Or the normal order of the clause elements may not be observed e.g. Adjunct may come before the subject. At the lexico-semantic level, words that should not go together may be deliberately brought together. e.g. “dangerous safety,” “open secret.”

3.5 Style as Conformity

Style as conformity can be seen as the first available option for a writer to express himself. This is so because virtually all possible fields that a written material can belong to have been established. Any style that is distinct is so as a result of deviation. In fact, it is on the notion of “style as conformity” that the idea of “style as choice” operates and then results in or brings out the possibility of style as deviation. That is, a writer needs, first of all, to decide whether to conform with the established style or to deviate. It is not in all situations that a writer enjoys flexibility to deviate. Style as conformity is often “strictly enforced” in certain fields or circumstances. This is often in academic/educational field as regard students’ research projects. It is also found so in some professional writings, where a considerable conformity to the established format or diction is expected for a text to earn acceptability.

One major weakness of conformity to the established style is that it clips creativity. But the moment a text accommodates or injects some creativity in the style, it becomes marked as deviation from the norm.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Mention and explain two areas of human endeavour in which style as conformity is relevant.

3.6 Style as Period or Time

Style may also relate to time/period. This is so because language is dynamic – it is always changing. This becomes obvious when we look at the stages in the development of the English language e.g. Old English, Middle English and Modern English. When we look at a script in Old English now, it will seem as if it were written in a different language because of the differences in syntax, vocabulary, spelling, etc. Even within the so-called Modern English, there are variations. The type of English we use today is different from Shakespearean English in many ways. So, since language changes along time axis, style is also expected to vary along the same axis. The study of language along time axis is termed diachronic linguistics. You may compare diachronic linguistics with synchronic linguistics which deals with the study of language at a particular time/period.

The style of any given period has recognizably predominant features that make such a period distinct. A period usually dictates the style employed by the writers. For example,

Shakespeare and his contemporaries used a particular style of writing i.e. writing in verses. It was not until Henrik Ibsen came up with plays in the prose form that the previous style was abandoned.

Similarly, the Victorian, Elizabethan, Renaissance and even the modern periods all have peculiar styles different from another. In a nutshell, the noticeable convention and pattern of language use that inform the urge of a particular period, make the style of that period.

3.7 Style as Situation

Usually, language is used according to situation or circumstance. It is the context that determines language choice in speaking or writing. Certain words are appropriate for certain occasions, while some are considered taboo, vulgar or abominable. For example, a Professor, in a scholarly conference, cannot indulge in a vulgarism like: “that theory is fucking up”.

Consequently, a given situation has a great influence on the choice made at every level of language description. The concept of register further buttresses this point. For example, registers as aspect of style tend to be associated with particular groups of people or sometimes specific situations of use (Journalese, Legalese, Liturgese, Babytalk, the language of Sport Commentaries), the language of criminals –argot, the languages of the courtroom, the classroom, etc). We shall say more about register, later in this course.

4.0 CONCLUSION

From the above, it becomes clear that the study of style is the preoccupation of stylistics. Stylistics itself can be approached from different perspectives. The basic objective of stylistics is to reveal how language is used to express what it expresses in a given text.

5.0 SUMMARY

Stylistics is an important area of linguistics which has attracted the attention of many scholars. Apart from its academic relevance, stylistics is applicable in many other areas of human endeavours where language is used. As a student, of stylistics you should pay close attention to how language is used in any text. We have focused in this unit on some popular perspectives on style, namely, style as choice, style as the man, style as deviation, style as conformity and style as time/period.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) What do you understand by style?
- (2) Discuss the concept of stylistics in its broad sense.
- (3) Explain each of the following:
 - (a) Style as choice
 - (b) Style as the man
 - (c) Style as deviation
 - (d) Style as conformity

- (e) Style as time/period
- (f) Style as situation.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 THE NATURE AND GOALS OF STYLISTICS

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- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

A study of the varieties of language whose properties put that language in context in an attempt at establishing the principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individuals in their use of language is important. In this unit, therefore, we shall examine issues relating to the nature and goals of stylistics in order to identify the principles that are responsible for individual styles in the use of language.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) define stylistics further and explain its nature;
- (ii) discuss the concept of style in stylistics and mention various approaches to style; and
- (iii) explain the goals of stylistics.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 What is Stylistics?

Since its emergence as a significant academic field within the scope of linguistics in the 1960s, stylistics has continued to attract intellectual attention of varying degrees. Several meanings and theories of stylistics exist in linguistic scholarship (Crystal and Davy, 1969, Fowler, 1975 and Wales, 2001 etc.). While some see stylistics as a branch of linguistics that deals with the study of varieties of language, its properties, principles behind choice, dialogue, accent, length and register (Bradford, 1979 and Downes, 1998), others insist that it attempts to establish principles capable of explaining the particular [style] choices used by individuals and social groups in their use of language (Turner, 1973, Birch, 1995 and Fowler, 1998 etc.).

Taken together, all these arguments demonstrate that style is central to the study of stylistics. The word style refers to the choice of words/expressions in a given context by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on. Thus, studies in style have shown that style is “the selection and arrangement of linguistic features which are open to choice” (De Vito, 1967). Often times, the author’s identity is given away by some details reflecting, habit of expression or thought, and these seem to confirm that each writer has a linguistic ‘thumb-print’, an individual combination of linguistic habits which somehow betrays him in all that he writes. Accordingly, a writer’s idiosyncratic way of expressing himself or herself is an offshoot of his or her personality. Crystal and Davy (1983) opine that style is the “effectiveness of a mode of expression”.

Style may be said to relate to communicative performance, which is the demonstration of the speaker’s or writer’s language capacity in generating and understanding specific communicative contexts. Stylistics therefore is the study of style. But style itself, by its nature, is a subject of debate.

3.2 The Nature of Stylistics

Stylistics is a borderline discipline between language and literature. It focuses on language use in both literary and non-literary texts. In doing this, it uses insights from numerous disciplines such as literature, psychology, sociology, philosophy and so on. Therefore, while it has its own focus, it is multidisciplinary in nature. Stylistics looks at style in such dimension as:

Style as Choice: This considers style as the characteristic choices that a writer/speaker makes in a text at the various levels of language description.

Style as Deviation: What is deviant i.e. what does not conform to the ‘standard’ is said to be stylistically significant. This can also be at any level of language description.

Style as Situation: The situation is the context in which a text comes to life. This could be physical, socio-cultural, pragmatic, etc.

Style as Temporal Phenomenon: This deals with the time of relevance of style. That is, whether it is still in vogue or not (ancient or modern). A good example is Old English versus Modern English.

Style as the Individual: This focuses on the specific features that are associated with particular individuals i.e. writers’ or speakers’ idiolects.

3.3 The Goals of Stylistics

Stylistics is adaptive in nature such that its framework, as a veritable linguistic analytical approach, deals with a whole range of human discourses: medical, religious, political, legal, social, interpersonal, group communication, and so on. The practice of stylistics is targeted at achieving certain goals:

- (1) ***To establish discourse peculiarities:*** Stylistics studies the peculiarities that characterize the discourse of a writer, speaker, period, people or genre. Hence,

stylistics could bring out certain features of Soyinka's works which are different from Osofisan's works. It could help us identify the British English style as different from the American English style, etc.

- (2) ***To induce appreciation of discourses:*** Stylistics involves the appreciation of a discourse in order to increase our enjoyment of the discourse. It opens the reader's mind to the form and function of a particular discourse. Stylistics is sensitive to different linguistic manipulations and choices in a given text. It unfolds the beauty in authorial and characters' linguistic choices and opens the reader or listener's mind to the aesthetic appeals of such choices.
- (3) ***To ascertain linguistic habits:*** An author's style is the product of a particular linguistic habit, conditioned by some social, cultural and ideological environments. The objective of stylistics is to help determine the linguistic background and orientation of a given writer or speaker. Thus, according to Chatman (1971), every analysis of style can be seen as an attempt to discover the artistic principles that underpin the choice a writer has made. As a useful tool in the interpretation of a texts, stylistics serves as a mode of analysis for learning language and developing awareness for the workings of language and the development of confidence to work systematically towards effective interpretation of a text. This knowledge would lead us to arrive at an objective rather than a subjective conclusion.

The knowledge of stylistics equally results in the proper analysis of speaking and writing habits to discover patterns which characteristically differentiate one variety of language from the other. A number of factors namely: situations, mode of communication, context, socio-linguistic constraints, as well as the need to conform to linguistic appropriateness, account for variation across genres.

According to Crystal and Davy (1969: 10):

the aim of stylistics is the analyse language habits with the main purpose of identifying, from the general mass of linguistic features common to English as used on every conceivable occasion, those features which are restricted to certain kinds of social context; to explain, where possible, why such features have been used, as opposed to other alternatives; and to classify these features into categories based upon a view of their function in the social context.

To make critical judgements: The application of stylistics on a discourse may help a stylistician to make an evaluative or critical judgement. Stylistician often makes value-

judgement statements like: “it is composed in grand style.” The critical judgements made, based on veritable data are usually objective, hence, stylistics can help us reveal a good style from a bad one.

In order to achieve the goals stated above and some others that have not been mentioned here, stylistics looks at many features of a text such as:

Graphological Features: Through these features, a stylistician can reasonably explore and give descriptions of the physical appearance of a literary text. Here, such features as the use of punctuation marks to create stylistic effects are significant. However, a major feature here is foregrounding. In this instance, certain words are foregrounded or brought to the fore to give them prominence through the use of italics, capital letters, underlining, and so on. You will learn more about foregrounding later in this course.

Syntactic Features: The focus of syntactic analysis here is the identification of the effects created by the various sentence types in a text. Such aspects as ellipses, parataxis, hypotaxis, right and left-branching sentences, etc are considered significant. For instance, dislocation in syntax is occasionally used to demonstrate the dislocation in human thoughts (stream of consciousness) and this is highly manifested in James Joyce’s novels.

Lexico-Semantic Features: The stylistic use of words here may produce denotative, connotative, collocative, affective, thematic, or stylistic meanings based on the speaker’s or writer’s intention. Certain characteristic use of words may help us to identify the context of a text, its genre, its communicative purposes, its author, and so on.

Self-Assessment Exercise

- (i) What do you now think stylistics is?
- (ii) What do you consider as the goals of stylistics?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Stylistics adopts a multidisciplinary approach to achieve its goals. It examines language use in different contexts in order to determine the style, purpose(s), meaning(s), etc and the over-all merit of a particular work. With the techniques of stylistics at your disposal, you will be able to evaluate any instance of language use with respect to its content and form.

5.0 SUMMARY

In summary, stylistics enables us to interact meaningfully well with a text. It opens our minds to the various dimensions of a particular literary or non-literary work. It is a discipline which is relevant to all activities which rely on the use of language. Through our knowledge of stylistics, our knowledge of textual appreciation will increase, just as our knowledge of the workings of language will appreciate. In short, stylistics will make

us informed observers and analysts of language use in the process of negotiating meanings.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) Mention and discuss two goals of stylistics.
- (2) Describe briefly the nature of stylistics.
- (3) What is style?

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UNIT 3 TYPES OF STYLISTICS

Content

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Linguistic Stylistics
 - 3.1.1 Some Features of Linguistic Stylistics
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 - 3.2 Literary Stylistics
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall discuss linguistic stylistics and literary stylistics as two broad types of stylistics. In discussing linguistic stylistics, we shall use some poems and demonstrate how stylistics can be done at some levels of language description. We shall therefore look at graphological, phonological, syntactic, and lexico-semantic features. In addition, we shall also discuss the literary perception of style.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) mention two types of stylistics and distinguish between them;
- (ii) identify some features that can be looked at in a linguistic stylistic analysis;
- (iii) explain what is involved in a stylistic analysis of a literary text.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Linguistic Stylistics

Linguistic stylistics explores the linguistic features of a text. Remember that there is reference to style as the selection of certain linguistic forms or features over other possible ones. Linguistic stylistics, therefore, points out those linguistic choices which a writer or speaker has made as well as the effects of the choices.

The foregoing implies that linguistic stylistics is primarily concerned with the use of language and its effects in a text. Given a piece of literature, a poem for example, a linguistic stylistic analyst will be interested in describing the form and function of

language in the poem, paying attention to certain curiosities that may be accounted for in linguistic terms.

This does not imply that linguistic stylistics ignores the meanings which a poem conveys. In fact, the meaning is the focal point. But what the system of language is used to do is of paramount importance to the stylistician who works within the system of linguistic stylistics. Widdowson (1975: 5) posits that "... it may well be the case that the linguist's analysis of the language of a poem is dependent on some prior intuitive interpretation of what the poem is about."

Linguistic stylistics, then, directs its attention primarily to how a piece of discourse expresses the language system. By language system, we mean linguistic features that can be examined based on the levels of language. In the section that follows, we shall examine some linguistic features based on the levels of language description. But before then, let us note that the gap between linguistic stylistic and literary studies has been bridged by the advent of the discipline of linguistic stylistics. Linguistic stylistics was introduced to act as a complementary approach to literary criticism where the linguistic study of texts was conspicuously absent.

Linguistics being "the academic discipline which studies language scientifically" (Crystal and Davy, 1969: 10) has everything to do with language usage and its applicability. According to Ayeomoni (2003: 177),

Like any scientific discipline, the linguistic study of texts is precise and definite as it employs objective and verifiable methods of analysis and interpretation of texts.

Linguistic stylistics studies the devices in languages (such as rhetorical figures and syntactical patterns) that are considered to produce expressive or literary style. It is different from literary criticism in that while literary criticism rests solely on the subjective interpretation of texts, linguistic stylistics concentrates on the "linguistic frameworks operative in the text" (Ayeomoni 2003: 177). This gives the critic a pattern to follow; what to look out for in a text; and consequently his standpoint can be verified statistically.

Similarly, the linguistic study of a text reveals a writer's style and purpose of writing. For instance, the use of proverbs in Achebe's novels defined his style. Thus, if one criticizes a text through the parameters of linguistic usage, it can be verified, but if on the other hand, one relies primarily on literary criticism, one will only react to a text as his emotion dictates.

However, Hassan (1985) cited in Ayeomoni (2003) notes that linguistic stylistics acknowledges the fact that it is not just enough to study the language of literary texts,

since there are two aspects to literature: the verbal and the artistic. In view of this factor, linguistic stylistics has its major purpose, which is relating language use in literary texts to its artistic function. So when language as used in the text is studied, it is not studied in isolation of the artistic function, it is studied in order to ascertain how the writer has used language to express his message.

According to Ayeomoni (2003), linguistic stylistics is known by such other terms as:

- (a) **Stylistics**: (Hassan, 1985; Kachru and Herbert 1972; and Widdowson 1975).
- (b) **Modern Stylistics** (Freeman, 1973).
- (c) **The New Stylistics** (Fowler, 1986; Cluysenaar, 1975; Leech and Short, 1981).
- (d) **Literary Linguistic Stylistics** (Michael Short, 1982).

3.1.1 Some Features of Linguistic Stylistics

In this section, we shall limit ourselves to some linguistic features that would serve as a platform for an in-depth stylistic analysis of any text, though in this unit, we restrict ourselves to poetry.

3.1.2 Lexical Repetition

As a form of lexical repetition, words may be repeated, synonyms or near-synonyms may be used. At times, poets repeat some lexical items, near-synonymy may be used, for instance, to foreground the intended message. For instance, look at these lines:

Jilt her
Rape her
Milk her
Suck her

In the above extract from Okpanachi's *The Eaters of the Living* (p. 80), we find a sense of lexical relation. "Milk" and "Suck" in the context of the poem function as synonyms. The synonymous selection is, however, determined by the emotion of the poet.

The overall intention of the poet is to emphasise his disdain for the political situation of his country. If we look closely at the poem, the words correspond with the social situation of the country which the poet depicts.

3.1.3 Lexico-Semantic Level

Semantics deals with meaning. At the lexico-semantic level, we look at the lexical choices made by a writer or speaker. Here, words can be chosen for their denotative, connotative and other dimensions of meanings. Look at this line:

"But tomorrow cannot be consoled."

The above line is taken from Yeibo's *Maiden Lines*. Syntactically, i.e., in terms of grammar, the line is normal. The sentence begins with 'but', giving the assumption that it contrasts with the idea that precedes it. But if we look at the sentence semantically, "tomorrow" is not an animate thing that can be consoled, it is only humans that can be "consoled" or not consoled. Making "tomorrow" to go with "consoled" creates some effect at this level.

3.1.4 Syntactic Level

This has to do with the arrangement of units larger than the word. These units include groups/phrases, clauses and sentences. Look at this sentence: "He went home".

The pattern of the sentence is SPA (S – Subject, P = Predicator, A – Adjunct).

A poet can violate the order of the above sentence in the form below:

"Home he went" (This has ASP pattern).

The item "home" occurs in the initial position of the sentence to foreground it. This is deviation for a specific effect.

3.1.5 Phonological Level (Sounds)

Phonology refers to how sound is organized to mean. Sound patterning functions linguistically in poetry to project a poet's purpose or concern in a work" (Aboh. 2008: 67-8). Poetry has fashions and different forms of sound patterning. Let us look at this example taken from Dasylva's *Songs of Odamolugbe*;

Their *stanzas* of stifling *scandals*
Cause the masses to *curse*
(p. 27)

This is an example of alliteration. The sound *stanzas* and *scandals* are the poet's deliberate selections. The sound effect created by such selection gives the reader a deeper sense of understanding the enormity of corruption and insincerity in the Nigerian society. It is the insincerity of the rulers that 'cause' the masses to 'curse'.

3.1.6 Graphological Level

Another way in which poets can make us contemplate the otherwise unmarked morphological structure of words is by playing around with word boundaries. Graphology means the arrangement of words based on their meanings. If a poet breaks the word "Kingdom" into "king - dom" the poet has tampered with the morphology of the word, thereby affecting the meaning. Let us consider the example taken from Ushie's *Hill Songs*:

On the wrinkled face of the hills
I see my shortening shadow
as my sun creeps towards the west hills
gently, gently, gently
like afternoon's flame

l
o
w
e
r
i
n
g

to ash in the evening.
(P. 35)

The above poem describes birth and death. While the preceding lines of the poem explicitly point to aging, “lowering” (the graphological symbolism) shows interment. It describes the process of burial.

3.2 Literary Stylistics

Literary stylistics is synonymous to literary criticism, in a way. The ultimate purpose of literary stylistics is to explain the individual message of the writer in terms which makes its importance clear to others. The task of literary stylistics is to decipher a message encoded in an unfamiliar way, to express its meaning in familiar and communal terms and thereby to provide the private message with a public relevance. This activity is not essentially different from the criticism of other art forms.

The literary stylistician is obviously sensitive to language, but his/her concern is not principally with the way the signals of the artist are constructed but with the underlying message which an interpretation of the signals reveal. Furthermore, literary stylistics is less interested in devising a metalanguage into which the original message can be transferred. The literary stylistician is rather concerned with figurative and evocative uses of language which characterize the message being interpreted. Literary stylistics, then, is primarily concerned with messages and the interest in codes (language) lies in the meaning they convey in particular instances of use. The beauty of language and how it is used to capture reality is also the focal concern of literary stylistics. Literary stylistics takes interpretation as its aim. It is interested in finding out what aesthetic experience or perception of reality a poem, for example, is attempting to convey. Its observation of how language system is used will serve only as a means to this end.

Literary stylistics, therefore, searches for underlying significance, for the essential artistic vision which language is used to express. It treats literary works as messages.

Literary stylistics undertakes the interpretation of a text as the ultimate objective of analysis. It is based on the consideration of the stylistically significant features of the text (including clause and sentence structure, paragraphing and cohesion) and of lexis. It is however the stylistic effects and functions produced by these features rather than the objective description of them that is more important here (i.e. in literary stylistics).

To the literary stylistician, the description of language and style is not important in itself; instead, the primary task is to provide an account of his intuitions concerning the effect and functions produced by the text. This is expected to provide a sure basis for the interpretation of texts and for teaching interpretation.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The above examples are just small parts of stylistic analysis, especially a linguistic stylistic analysis. The ability of an analyst to unearth stylistic features depend, by and large, on his linguistic and literary awareness. Linguistic stylistics and literary stylistics are not limited to the analysis of the language of literature. Any form of language use such as news reporting, advertising, football commentary, etc can be analysed stylistically from the two perspectives.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have established a distinction between two main types of stylistics: literary stylistics and linguistic stylistics. Under linguistic stylistics, we examined some linguistic features that have stylistic effects. We argued that linguistic stylistics is primarily concerned with the description of language used in a text, while literary stylistics is principally interested in interpreting the message of a work of art; making a personal message of an artist gain communal significance. However, in practice, there is no justification for bifurcating stylistics into linguistic stylistics and literary stylistic. Therefore, these two forms of stylistics are merged in this course, in practice.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) Mention and explain two types of stylistics.
- (2) Identify some features that can be focused on in a linguistic stylistic analysis.
- (3) Carry out a literary analysis of any poem of your choice.

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UNIT 4 TYPES OF STYLISTICS (II)

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Reader-Response Stylistics
 - 3.2 Affective Stylistics
 - 3.3 Pragmatic Stylistics
 - 3.4 Pedagogical Stylistics
 - 3.5 Forensic Stylistics
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Stylistics has become so vibrant a field of study that it has drawn insights from a number of disciplines or fields. Each of these disciplines has its own approach to the study of style in texts. A situation such as this has brought about various types of stylistics. Thus, it becomes possible for a stylistician to do a thorough stylistic examination of a text by adopting any of the various approaches at his or her disposal.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) identify four other types of stylistics apart from linguistic and literary stylistics;
- (ii) explain the types of stylistics identified in (i); and
- (iii) describe the method(s) of each type of stylistics identified in (i).

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Reader-Response Stylistics

This type of stylistics stemmed from the strand of modern 'subjective' criticism called reader-response criticism, otherwise known, in the German school of criticism as reception aesthetics. Very notable figures among the proponents of modern criticism, I.A. Richards and William Empson, steered the critics of texts towards appreciating the words, which are contained on the pages of a text, rather than considering the author of such a text.

This development in literary criticism is a radical departure from the Romantic conception of the author as being totally responsible for whatever meaning that one, as a reader, may encounter on the pages of a text. Inspired by Roland Barthes' view, the new critics, as the proponents of modern criticism are called, believed that the meaning of a

text can, solely, be determined through the interaction between the reader and the words on the pages of the text. This is what the reader-response criticism concerns itself with.

Thus, the reader-response stylistics examines the reader's response to a text as a response to a horizon of expectations. By a horizon of expectations, is meant that there is multiplicity of meanings or interpretations in a text and these can be accessed by the reader according to his or her level of what Jonathan Culler (1981: 25) describes as "literary competence". A reader's literary competence is highly informed by the social world in which a text is produced as it usually has a shaping effect on his or her interpretation of such a text.

In the reader-response stylistics, there is an interaction between the structure of the text and the reader's response. Thus, the reader becomes an active part of the text. The reader-response stylistics evokes a situation where individual readers give meaning to the text. This is because each reader will interact with the text differently, as the text may have more than one vivid interpretation.

The theorists of this type of stylistics share two beliefs:

- (a) the role of the reader cannot be ignored;
- (b) readers do not passively consume the meaning presented to them by a literary text.

Instead, readers actively make the meaning they find in literature. This is to say that literature exists and signifies when it is read and its force is an affective one.

Furthermore, reading is a temporal process, not a spatial one as new critics (formalists) assume when they step back and survey the literary work as if it were an object spread out before them. In *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction From Bunyan to Beckett* (1974) and *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1976) (both cited in Murfin and Ray, 1998), the German critic Wolfgang Iser comments that texts contain gaps that powerfully affect the reader, who must explain them, connect what they separate, and create in his or her mind aspects of a work that are not in the text but are implied by the text. The reader ceases to be a mere passive recipient of the ideas planted in a text by an author, but an active contributor/maker of meanings.

Reader-response stylistics/criticism has evolved into a variety of new forms. Subjectivists like David Bleich, Norman Holland, and Robert Crossman have viewed the reader's response not as one "guided" by the text, but rather as one motivated by deep-seated, personal, psychological needs.

3.2 Affective Stylistics

Attracted to the fascinating insights proffered by the reader-response criticism on the process of criticizing a text, an American critic cum stylistician, Stanley Fish, appropriated it (the reader-response criticism) as affective stylistics. Affective stylistics

came around to be identified as one of the two varieties of a major branch of stylistics, namely, literary stylistics and expressive stylistics. Whereas expressive stylistics is writer/speaker - oriented, that is, focuses on style as purely the representation of the personality of the author, affective stylistics is reader/ hearer – oriented i.e. its focus is on the consumers.

Like its close partner (the reader - response stylistics), affective stylistics ferrets out the emotional responses that a reader or hearer makes in the course of his or her interacting with, that is, reading or listening to a text. However, it goes further to examine the psychological operations that are usually involved in the reader's process of reading or the hearer's process of listening; hence, it is, otherwise, known as "process stylistics".

According to Fish (1970), in affective stylistics, the stylistician relies primarily upon his or her affective responses to stylistics, elements in the text. Here, the literary text is not formally self-sufficient; it comes alive through the interpretative strategy that the reader deploys. Hence the need to analyse the developing responses of the reader in relation to the words as they succeed one another in the text. The work and its result are one and the same thing; what a text is and what it does.

Affective stylistics could equally be seen as the impact of a text's structure on the reader as the work unfolds. During the process of affective stylistics, viewers continue to take in new information that must be incorporated into their current understanding of the work. With each new bit of information, the reader may form new expectations of where the work is going, perhaps, rejecting old interpretations, opinions and assumptions and making new ones. The affective domain includes the manner in which we deal with things emotionally, such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasm, motivations and attitudes.

3.3 Pragmatic Stylistics

Pragmatic stylistics is part of the manifestation of linguistic stylistics. This variety of stylistics shows the meeting point between pragmatics and stylistics, that is, how pragmatic resources, such as performative and speech acts can be employed to achieve stylistic effects.

Scholars have demonstrated that the objective of pragmatics is to show how users of any language can use the sentences obtainable in such a language to convey messages which are not directly or explicitly shown in the propositional content of the sentences. Pragmatics came round to fill the gap created by the truth-condition semantics. The latter is a semantic theory which holds the view that the truthfulness or the falsity of a sentence or an utterance is subject to the degree to which the propositional content of such a sentence or an utterance is verifiable from the world.

Stylistics, as has been shown in the previous units, is traditionally concerned with the study of style in language. Verdonk (2002:4) defines it as the analysis of a distinctive expression and description of its purpose and effect. The partnership between both pragmatics and stylistics appears quite possible given the qualities that they share. Both are, for instance, interested in such features as are beyond the sentence boundary. The application of pragmatic and stylistic theories to text analysis indicates a clear departure from how texts were analysed when modern linguistics began to develop. In this respect, Dressier et al (1993:16) inform us that the tradition at the inception of the evolution of modern linguistics was for analysts to confine the analysis of a text to the domain of sentence which was, then, regarded as the largest unit with an inherent structure. The pragmatic meaning of a text can be recovered through the context that produces the text. It is the realization that context is necessary in the exploration of the pragmatic meaning that guides a language user or text producer into employing appropriate linguistic resources in the text in order to achieve the stylistic meaning through what Ayodabo (1997:136) regards as "...the degree of effectiveness of an utterance (herein referred to as text) in relation to the learners (or readers) at the perlocutionary level". But for the perlocutionary level to be achieved, we are informed by the speech act theory (the proponents of which include Austin 1962 and Searle 1969) that the illocutionary acts must have satisfied certain felicity conditions.

This is not our concern in the present study. It is therefore, obvious that the frequency of a speech act is highly significant in understanding the extent to which it has been stylistically exploited by text producers to exert some perlocutionary effect(s) on the reader(s) of such a text. In this arrangement, we have the yoking of pragmatics and stylistics. Pragmatic stylistics is, thus, viewed as a two-in-one theory of text analysis, which focuses on the effects of contexts on the text.

3.4 Pedagogical Stylistics

This type of stylistics shows the instructional use into which stylistics is put. Wales (1997: 438) explains that stylistics has been, unarguably, considered a teacher's ready tool of teaching language and literature to both native and foreign speakers of English. In order to achieve his goal of teaching with ease, a teacher is guided by certain strategies or objectives. Often times, a teacher cannot but be flexible in his or her course of achieving his or her teaching objectives. In this wise, a close ally to pedagogical stylistics is classroom discourse analysis.

For long, pedagogical stylistics has been intrinsically linked with the teaching of the linguistic features of written texts as a means of enhancing students' understanding of literature and language. It is based on the premise that stylisticians who are involved with teaching should be aware of the pedagogical orientation and reading paradigms which inform their practice. It is also a theoretical dimension to research undertaken into practice in the stylistics classroom.

Pedagogical stylistics emphasizes that the process of improving students' linguistic sensibilities must include greater emphasis upon the text as action; that is, upon the mental processing which is such as proactive part of reading and interpretation; and how all of these elements – pragmatic and cognitive as well as linguistic – function within quite specific social and cultural contexts.

The knowledge gained from the study of pedagogical stylistics will help students in understanding how language, grammar and rhetoric function in texts. It will follow these steps: firstly, students will acquire the knowledge that leads them to comprehend the basic grammatical and rhetoric concepts. Secondly, it will boost their practical knowledge, whereby students are able to analyse texts with the tool they have acquired at the first stage. The third stage is when students go into a mode of synthesizing all they have learned, which, in turn, allows them to move on to the production stage. Such a process is valuable, for example, in the contemporary creative writing classroom.

It is important to note that the process described here is not simply literary stylistics, but fundamentally pedagogical stylistics. The fact that a close, stylistic analysis of texts, literary or otherwise, for formative ends is pedagogically valuable is amply demonstrated by pedagogical stylistics.

3.5 Forensic Stylistics

Forensic stylistics is a part of forensic linguistics. In general, forensic stylistics is the application of stylistics to crime detection. Through the stylistic analysis of language use at the different levels of language description, it is possible to determine the author of a text. This may be applied to confessional statements to the police. Issues like voice recognition, identification of regional accents are often studied to arrive at useful conclusions in terms of crime detection (see Bloor, M. and Bloor, T. 2007).

4.0 CONCLUSION

It has been shown in the foregoing that stylistics adopts a multi-disciplinary approach to the analysis of texts. We are, thus, made to appreciate the claim that though stylistics is located in linguistics we should not lose sight of the fact that it (stylistics) also draws inspiration from a number of disciplines. It is however the responsibility of an individual stylistician to determine when insights from specific disciplines or sub-disciplines are needed in his or her analysis of a text and how such insights can be effectively utilized.

5.0 SUMMARY

Stylistics has been proved to be a useful tool in the hands of an analyst who wishes to analyse a text from any stand point. Analysing a text provides one a better way to read a text. Stylistics may be regarded as a window into the world of texts. An analyst may adopt a particular approach in opening the window into the world of texts. The different approaches that may be adopted are embedded in the different strands of stylistics as

reader-response stylistics, affective stylistics, pragmatic stylistics, pedagogical stylistics and forensic stylistics.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) Identify four other types of stylistics apart from linguistic and literary stylistics.
- (2) Explain carefully the type of stylistics identified in (1) above.
- (3) How does each type of stylistics identified in (1) work?

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MODULE 2 LEVELS OF LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

UNIT 1 LEVELS OF LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS (1) (The Phono-Graphological Level)

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
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 - 3.2 The segmentals
 - 3.3 The suprasegmentals
 - 3.4 Graphology
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Systemic Functional Grammar developed by M.A.K. Halliday recognises phonology and graphology as the levels of language substance. Phonology deals with the phonic substance (segmental and suprasegmental units of language) while graphology deals with the graphic substance. This unit will expose you to those things that should be considered in doing a stylistic analysis at the phono-graphological level of language description. Look at the table below, taken from Tomori (1977: 45).

Phonetics				
	Linguistics			
SUBSTANCE	$\leftarrow \rightarrow$	FORM	$\leftarrow \rightarrow$	SITUATION
Phonic Substance	Phonology	(Grammar lexis)	Context	(extra-textural features)
Graphic substance	Orthography			

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) explain the phono-graphological level of language description;
- (ii) identify the features focused on at the phono-graphological level; and
- (iii) carry out a phono-graphological analysis of any text of your choice.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Phono-graphology

Phono-graphology as a term was popularized by Halliday (1961) in explicating a number of different levels at which linguistic events should be accounted for. Within this framework, Halliday (1961:243-4) observes that the primary levels are ‘form’, ‘substance’ and ‘context’. According to him, the substance is the material of language: ‘phonic’ (audible noises) or ‘graphic’ (visible marks), hence phono-graphology is the organisation of substance into meaningful events. The context relates the form to non-linguistic features of the situation in which language operates to yield extra-textual features. Therefore, Systemic Functional Linguistics recognizes the formal and the situational dimensions of language description.

Working within this tradition, Leech and Short (1981) identify four levels of language description: syntax, semantics, phonology and graphology. Syntax and phonology form the expression plane and interact to bring out meaning which is the pre-occupation of semantics. According to them, graphology is an alternative form of realisation to phonology. Although phonological features can be said to be remote in a written text, they are still not irrelevant. After all, a text is written to be read or spoken. Spellings can be exploited to suggest some phonological features and these will be more prominent when the text is read aloud. Phonologically, the analysis of language at this level involves the basic sound units such as the combination of sounds, stress, tone and patterns of intonation. Furthermore, it is at this level that we consider the possible syllable structure of a particular language and the various ways in which syllables can be combined. This aspect can also be helpful in a contrastive study of languages. For example, while two or more consonants can occur in a sequence in English, it is not so in Yoruba.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Describe the syllable structure in your indigenous language.

3.2 The Segmentals

The segmental units of English consist of at least twenty vowels and twenty-four consonants. The twenty vowels are made up of twelve pure vowels and eight diphthongs. Also, the twenty-four consonants are made up of fifteen voiced and nine voiceless consonants. Refer to your phonetics and phonology course for the basic knowledge of these segmental units. Here, it is enough for you to note that writers, especially poets, can exploit the sounds and their structures to achieve special effects e.g. through the use of alliteration, assonance, and so on.

3.3 The Suprasegmentals

The suprasegmentals are the units that are larger than the segmentals. Stress, for example, is a suprasegmental unit. It refers to the degree of force or loudness with which a syllable is pronounced. It can also indicate a word class as in ¹present (noun), pre¹sent (verb); ¹object (noun), ob¹ject (verb). Intonation which is another suprasegmental unit indicates primarily, the falling or rising pitch of a word or sentence as in:

- (a) He has come ↘ (falling intonation)
- (b) He has come?↗ (rising intonation)

The falling intonation in (a) above indicates a statement, while the rising intonation in (b) indicates a question. The combination of stress and intonation gives the English language its peculiar rhythm, and writers, especially poets, utilize heavily this feature of the language to achieve some effects in their writings.

3.4 Graphology

At this level, such things as spelling, punctuation, space management, underlining, use of pictures, colouring, e.t.c. are considered and analysed. The pattern of writing can also indicate the variety of language involved. For instance, words like ‘color’ and ‘meter’ are classified as American English, based on their spellings. Conversely, their varieties (‘colour’ and ‘metre’) are regarded as British English for the same reason. Graphological elements are often used to achieve foregrounding in a text. Foregrounding simply means making certain elements in a text prominent so as to attract attention. Any aspect of a text that is foregrounded is made conspicuous to attract the reader’s attention. You will learn more about foregrounding later in this course.

4.0 CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, we have been able to explain the concept of phono-graphology as the yoking of phonology and graphology. While phonological features are of special significance in speech, graphological elements are also of immense importance in writing. Both phonic and graphic elements of language form what systemic Functional Grammar calls the substance of language.

5.0 SUMMARY

Phono-graphological analysis can be said to involve the analysis of the deployment of phonological units of segmentals and suprasegmentals at one level and those of the graphic substance of language – i.e. features relating to the writing system. A phono-graphological analysis will be pertinent in the analysis of poetry, in particular. But both aspects are necessarily involved in a stylistic analysis of a text – be it spoken or written. This will be apparent when you consider a written text that is meant to be spoken. Such an analysis is no less significant in other genres if we are to account for their total significance.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) What do you understand by phono-graphology?
- (2) What features are significant in a phono-graphological analysis?
- (3) Do a phono-graphological analysis of the following text:

Elesin: Words are cheap. ‘We know you for
A man of honour. Well tell me, is this how
A man of honour should be seen?
Are these not the same clothes in which
I came among you a full half-hour ago?’

Iyaloja: Richly, richly, robe him richly
The cloth of honour is *alari*
Sanyan is the band of friendship
Boa-skin makes slippers of esteem.
(*Death and the King’s Horseman* pp. 16-17)

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UNIT 2 LEVELS OF LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS (II) **(The Lexico-Semantic Level)**

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Semantics
 - 3.2 Lexico-semantics
 - 3.3 Lexical Relations
 - 3.4 Types of Words
 - 3.5 Denotative and Connotative of Meanings
 - 3.6 Idiomatic Meaning
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The lexico-semantic level is the level at which a stylistic analyst looks at the author's deployment of words and their meanings in a text. According to Milmkiaer (2002: 339), the study of lexis is the study of the vocabulary of a language in all its aspects, and as Ajulo (1994: 1 – 8) says, many linguists have started to develop interest in lexical studies in English, perhaps as a result of the realization that “there is a need for a separate level of linguistic analysis ... to cater for certain linguistic patterns and regularities which the grammatical level... alone cannot take care for” (Ajulo 1994: 5).

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) explain the lexico-semantic level of language description;
- (ii) distinguish between denotation and connotation;
- (iii) mention and explain at least three lexical relations; and
- (iv) carry out a lexico-semantic analysis of a text.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Semantics

This is the study of the linguistic meaning of morphemes, words, phrases and sentences. Subfields of semantics are lexical semantics and structural semantics. Lexical semantics is concerned with the meaning of words and the meaning of syntactic units larger than the word. Roman Jakobson is quoted by Fromkin et al (2003) as saying: that language without meaning is meaningless. Semantics is the philosophical and scientific study of meaning. It can also be said to be a branch of linguistics which is pre-occupied with the study of meaning. The term is one of a group of English words formed from the various

derivatives of the Greek verb “semano” (“to mean” or “to signify”). It is difficult to formulate a distinct definition for each of these terms because their use largely overlaps in the literature, despite individual preferences. Semantics may also be approached from a philosophical (logical) point of view. In the disciplines of philosophy and linguistics, semantics is the study of the relationship between the signs of a language and their meanings. Although they approach semantics differently, both disciplines propose to explain how persons derive meanings from linguistic expressions. However, our concern here is semantics in linguistics. In its own case, lexis describes the entire storage of words and expressions in a language. The term ‘lexicon’ derives from the root word ‘lexis’ and it refers to the list of the possible words in a language.

Linguists today study three levels of language: the phonetic (relating to sounds), syntactic (relating to the way in which words combine grammatically to make sentences) and the semantic. In comparison with the work done in the first two areas, linguists have accomplished little in the area of semantics. This controversial subject has split the ranks of linguists into several camps. Members of the school of interpretive semantics study structures of language, dependent on the conditions of the use. In contrast, the proponents of generative semantics insist that the communicative power of language must be acknowledged and that the meaning of sentences is a function of use. Yet another group goes further by maintaining that the science of meaning will not advance until theorists take into account the psychological questions of how people attain concepts and how these relate to word meanings.

Semantics helps us to understand the nature of language because it accounts for the abnormalities experienced when reading English sentences such as: “The chicken ate the man” “My cat read English” and “A dress was walking to the door”. The abnormality in each of the sentences above is not noticed in its syntax because it adheres to the same basic syntactic rule such as:

<u>The Plate</u>	<u>kicked</u>	<u>the man</u>
NP	V	NP
Subject	predicator	object

Hence, each of the sentence is grammatical.

Fromkin (et al) (2003) assert that one of the important ways of representing semantic properties is by use of semantic features. These are formal and notational devices that indicate the presence or absence of semantic properties by pluses (+) and minuses (-). Words fulfil certain roles within the situation described by the sentence. These have been identified as Agents (subject), theme (object) and instrument (predicator). Further functions of noun phrases in a sentence include: experiencer, location, source, and goal, among others. Look at the following:

- (1) Sade saw a mosquito on the wall
 Experiencer Theme Location
- (2) She hit the mosquito with a stick
 Agent Theme Instrument
- (3) She handed the mosquito to Mary
 Agent Theme Goal

3.2 Lexico-semantics

The main argument of the lexical semanticists is that if the word is an identifiable unit of language, then, it must be possible to isolate a core stable meaning that enables its consistent use by a vast number of users in different situations. Linguists have attempted to unravel meanings of lexical items based on their componential features. The task involved is what is known as componential analysis which is a by-product of lexical composition, i.e. the process of analyzing lexical features. Pioneered by Katz and Fodor (1963), lexical semantics believes that words are decomposable into primitive meanings which can be represented by markers such as plus (+) and minus (-) matrices. For instance, ‘spinster’ may have the following componential features: +HUMAN, +FEMALE, +MATURITY, +SINGLE (- married). Thus, words can be broken down into their distinctive semantic features in order to describe what they mean. Somebody doing a stylistic analysis at the lexico-semantic level can use the lexical features of a text to describe how words are used to mean in the text.

3.3 Lexical Relations

Germane to the study of lexis is the semantic field theory which holds that the meanings represented in the lexicon are interrelated because they cluster together to form fields of meaning which in turn metamorphose to a larger field of entailment. This cycle continues until the total language is encompassed. The issue of lexical relations is closely related to the notion of semantic field. Lyons (1977) and Leech (1981) view basic or primitive semantic relations as synonymy, antonymy and hyponymy. Synonym refers to similarity of meanings. This is the relationship between “go” and “proceed.” Antonymy suggests oppositeness. It also denotes converseness for the reversible relationships between “husband” and “wife”, “male” and “female.” This is what Leech (1981: 102) calls relative opposition. Hyponymy is the relation of inclusion. For instance, the word “flower” will have the following co-hyponyms: rose, hibiscus, pride of Barbados. Similarly, the word “vehicle” has the following relations: van, bus, car, lorry and its co-hyponyms.

Writers or language users generally exploit their knowledge of lexical relations to enrich their communication. Special effects can be created through the use of synonyms or near-synonyms, antonyms, etc. With their presence, a text can achieve lexical cohesion as well as elegant variations.

3.4 Types of Words

In order to appreciate how words are used in a text, you can also look at the nature of the vocabulary contained in the text. At the level of vocabulary, language offers its users many choice possibilities. For example, a writer or speaker can choose simple or difficult words, concrete or abstract words, archaic or modern words, specific or general words. In addition, when you encounter a text, you will do well to watch out for the instances of compound words, blends, acronyms, coinages, and so on. Wherever they occur, these types of words will have some stylistic motivations, and it is your duty as a stylistic analyst to unearth such stylistic motivations. Do you know what acronyms are? Such factors as topic/ subject- matter, purpose(s), participants (audience), situation/ context, genres among others, will determine the types of words a particular language user chooses.

3.5 Denotative and Connotative Meanings

Denotative meaning refers to the conceptual meaning of a word. It is the plain or central meaning of a word. It is this type of meaning that is easily expressed in terms of componential features. For example, the denotative meaning of “man” can be expressed in terms of +HUMAN, + ADULT – FEMALE. The denotative meaning of a word is said to be its literal, objective meaning.

In addition to the denotative meaning, a word may also have a connotative meaning. Connotative meaning is a kind of additional, suggestive, personal or cultural meaning. If we regard denotation as an objective meaning of a word, connotation can be regarded as a subjective meaning. Connotatively, a woman can be regarded as a man, to suggest that she has the attributes of a man. Connotation points to the associative or figurative dimension of word meanings. This feature is of particular significance in poetry, where poets use words not only for their literal meaning but also for what they suggest.

In addition to appealing to the connotative dimension of word meaning, we should also note the use of such figures of speech as metaphor, personification, simile, hyperbole, etc. You will learn more about some figures of speech in unit 13.

3.6 Idiomatic Meaning

In describing language at the lexico-semantic level, your knowledge of the idiomatic meanings will be of relevance. Idioms are special collocations the meaning of which cannot be determined from the meanings of the elements that make them up. The meaning of an idiom has to be learnt as that of an individual lexical item. Examples of idioms are:

- (a) to rain cats and dogs.
- (b) to hold the bull by the horn.
- (c) to let a sleeping dog lie.

Do you know what these idioms mean? Note that apart from their literal contexts, words can also have idiomatic contexts, and language users often exploit these when they communicate. As you have learnt, words have a way of combining with one another in a text. The patterns of combination may be fixed or free. When it is fixed, we have an idiomatic expression.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The issue of meaning is a serious problem in linguistics; it has various dimensions. But as elusive as it is, we still have to consider it in any linguistic analysis because meaning is the core of any form of communication that relies on language. One level at which meaning is considered is the word level. This is significant because words make up a text; they constitute the basic unit of a text.

5.0 SUMMARY

A lexico-semantic analysis calls for the explication of word meanings in any text. Specifically, issues relating to lexical relations, dimensions of meaning (denotative, connotative, literal, figurative, idiomatic, etc) should be focused on. Again, at this level, you should note how a writer or speaker uses different types of words like abstract, concrete, simple, difficult, specific, general, and so on, to create meanings in a text. If we understand the nature of words and their patterns of combination in a text, we will be able to do a meaningful lexico-semantic analysis of the text.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) What does language description at the lexico-semantic level entail?
- (2) Undertake a lexico-semantic analysis of the following:

Iyaloja: Richly, richly, robe him richly
The cloth of honour is *alari*
Sanyan is the band of friendship
Boa-skin makes slippers of esteem.
(Death and the King's Horseman p. 17)

- (3) Distinguish between denotation and connotation.
- (4) What are lexical relations? Mention and explain some of them.

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UNIT 3 LEVELS OF LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS (III) **(The Syntactic Level)**

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main content
 - 3.1 Units of Grammar
 - 3.2 The group
 - 3.3 The clause
 - 3.4 The sentence
 - 3.5 Some other syntactic features
 - 3.6 The Notion of Rankshifting
 - 3.7 The Grammatical Category of Voice
- 4.0 Conclusion
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

One important level of linguistic analysis is the syntactic level. At this level, just like any other level of language description, significant statements of meaning can be made based on the observation of the choices that a writer/speaker has made, and, of course the genre of literature or the peculiarities of the text involved.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) mention the grammatical elements relevant to a syntactic analysis of a text;
- (ii) state the elements of the clause in English;
- (iii) describe the structure of the nominal group in English, and
- (iv) carry out a stylistic analysis of the syntactic features of a text.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Units of Grammar

Language is a structural entity as its elements exist and function in a hierarchical order. Such units or elements include morpheme, word, group (phrase), clause and sentence. The morpheme is the smallest unit while the sentence is the highest or the largest. In order to do a stylistic analysis at the syntactic level, you should be familiar with the group (or phrase), the clause and the sentence, among other relevant syntactic elements.

3.2 The Group

A group or phrase is a stretch of grammatically coherent words without a subject and a finite verb, unless it is a verbal group (i.e. a verb phrase). This means that only the verbal group or verb phrase can contain a finite verb. The sentence below contains three groups:

“He/is walking/along the road.”

“He” is the subject, “is walking” is a verbal group (or verb phrase), “along the road” is an adverbial group (you may also call it a prepositional phrase).

As you must have seen above, a group can contain one or more words and it functions like a single lexical item. In English, the nominal group (i.e. noun phrase) has (M)H(Q) structure. This means Modifier, Head, Qualifier. The most important word in the group is the “head”; the element that comes before the “head” is a modifier while the element that comes after the “head” is a qualifier. Out of the three i.e. modifier, head and qualifier, only the head is obligatory; hence (M) and (Q) are put in brackets in the notation.

Again, there can be more than one modifier before the “head” just as there can be more than one qualifier after the “head”.

Can you identify the head, the modifier(s) and the qualifier(s) in each of the following?

- (a) The beautiful girl
- (b) A woman to watch
- (c) An influential man to watch in our political circle.

The verbal group (i.e. the verb phrase) is also important. It may be a lexical verb alone or an auxiliary plus a lexical verb. The underlined expressions are examples of the verbal group:

- (a) Bola will go to school.
- (b) We should have been there.
- (c) We danced merrily.

In doing a stylistic analysis at the syntactic level, you will do well to pay a close attention to the choices which a writer/speaker has made at the level of group/phrase. With the nominal group, for example, you may note the use of modifiers and qualifiers with the head-words and bring out the stylistic effects of such.

3.3 The Clause

A clause is higher in rank than a group. It may be defined as a group of grammatically coherent words with a subject and a finite verb. The underlined expressions in the following are examples:

- (a) They left/when we did not expect.
- (b) Unless you guide him/he won't know what to do.

A clause that can stand as a sentence is called main or independent clause e.g. the first clause of our example (a) and the second clause of our example (b). On the other hand, a clause that cannot stand on its own is regarded as a dependent or subordinate clause e.g. the second clause of example (a) and the first clause of example (b). In addition, we can have noun clause, adjectival clause and adverbial clause. Look at these examples:

- (a) I don't know what he means. (noun clause)
- (b) Those who like us are many. (adjectival clause)
- (c) When he came we saw him. (adverbial clause)

You should note that although we have said that a clause should contain a finite verb, the verb may be omitted in some instances to give us what we call verbless clauses. Consider this: "If possible, let the man leave now." A form of the verb "be" together with "it" is omitted here. The full form is "If it is possible, let the man leave now." This omission is a case of grammatical ellipsis.

Furthermore, note the following elements of the clause: Subject (S), Predicator (P), Object (O), Complement (C) and Adjunct (A). Look at this example:

S	P	O	C	A
Many people /	are painting /	their houses /	white /	these days./

You also need to note these:

- The predicator is the only element, which is a verb phrase.
- The subject normally precedes the predicator (in a normal sentence in the indicative mood).
- The object is closely tied to the predicator in terms of meaning and it denotes the person or thing most intimately affected by the action or state, etc denoted by the predicator.
- The complement can look superficially like an object (both can be NPs). But in terms of meaning, it provides a definition or characterization of the subject or object. Objects and complements normally follow the predicator.
- If there is both an object and a complement in the clause, normally the complement follows the object, e.g.

S	P	O	C
---	---	---	---

- / John /called /Mary / a fool./
- Adjunct fills out the clause by adding extra circumstantial information of various kinds, which may relate to time, location, speaker's attitude e.t.c.
- There is no fixed number of adjuncts that can occur in a clause. In this wise, they are like modifiers in the nominal group.

(Adjuncts are the most mobile element of the clause).

- There are two kinds of objects: direct object (Od) and indirect object (Oi).
- There are also two kinds of complement: subject complement (Cs) and object complement (Co). Consider these.

(1) S P Cs
He / was / a great statesman./

(2) S P O Co
They / regarded / him / a great statesman

A careful study of the arrangement of the elements of the clause can illuminate your stylistic analysis. A writer or speaker can deviate from the normal order to create foregrounding e.g.

 A S P S P A
“Here / he / comes” instead of “He /comes / here.”

Can you explain the stylistic importance of that foregrounding?

3.4 The Sentence

The sentence is the highest or the largest of the grammatical units mentioned at the beginning of this unit. But the difference between the clause and the sentence is a matter of degree rather than kind. Simply put, a sentence is a group of grammatically related words that expresses a complete thought.

Both structural and functional criteria are taken into consideration in classifying sentences. Structurally, we can have simple, compound, complex and compound – complex sentences. In functional terms, we have such sentence types as declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamatory, requests. Find out examples of these functional sentence categories and examine closely their stylistic values.

When a sentence makes one statement and contains one finite verb, it is said to be a simple sentence e.g.:

- (1) The consultants at the University College Hospital are resourceful.
- (2) The University College Hospital is a pacesetter in tertiary health.

When a sentence makes at least two statements, (i.e. contains at least two finite verbs) and the two ideas/statements made are of equal status, the sentence is said to be compound e.g.

- (3) The consultants at the University College Hospital are resourceful and they enjoy regular refresher courses.

But if the two ideas/statements are linked in such a way that one is subordinate to the other, then we have a complex sentence. See this example:

- (4) The consultants at the University College Hospital are resourceful because they enjoy regular refresher courses.

A compound-complex sentence combines the features of both compound and complex sentences. This is an illustration:

- (5) The consultants at the University College Hospital are resourceful because they enjoy regular refresher courses and they use modern equipment.

The sentence types that we have discussed have their stylistic significance. Simple sentences are used to create emphasis, compound sentences are deployed for balancing of ideas, while complex sentences express dependency relationships e.g. cause and effect. A writer/speaker who intends to blend balanced ideas with dependency relation at a stretch will use a compound-complex sentence.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Give three examples each of simple, compound and complex sentences.

3.5 Some other Syntactic Features

What we have implied in our discussion in this unit is that your stylistic analysis of the syntactic features of a text should include the description of the group, the clause and the sentence. But in addition to this, there are other syntactic tactics that a writer or speaker can engage in. Such syntactic tactics include ellipsis, parallelism (i.e. repetition of a grammatical structure), references and other grammatical ties such as co-ordination and subordination. You will learn more about this in unit 8 which deals with cohesion and coherence.

3.6 The Notion of Rankshifting

The units of grammar mentioned in 3.1 exhibit a hierarchical order. The order is also called the English rank scale. It could be viewed from the ascending order perspective or the descending order perspective. “A unit of a higher rank”, as Tomori (1977: 47) puts it “may rank shift, that is, go one or more places down the scale to function in the next lower unit”. In the tradition of American linguistics, Tomori notes that the rankshifting phenomenon is referred to as “down-grading”. The two units of grammar that could rankshift are the group and the clause. The National Group for instance, can rankshift in

the Adverbial Group. Farinde and Ojo (2000: 49 – 50) itemize five manifestations of rankshift:

- (1) Clause can rankshift to operate at ‘q’ (qualifier) in the nominal group structure e.g. The man (who drove the car) has run away.
- (2) Clause can rankshift to operate as a whole nominal group (either at the subject position or the complement position) e.g. (who stole the meat) is still unknown. He liked (what she gave him).
- (3) Adverbial group can rankshift to operate at ‘q’ (qualifier) in the nominal group structure e.g.
The tree (by the roadside) will soon fall.
- (4) Nominal group can rankshift to operate as completive in a prepositional headed adverbial group e.g.
The boy in (the class) is sleeping.
- (5) Nominal group can rankshift as deictic in the nominal group structure. e.g.
(The Vice-Chancellor’s) office has been renovated.

3.7 The Grammatical Category of Voice

Voice as a grammatical category in relation to the Verbal Group relates to whether the subject acts or is acted upon. Voice in this sense can be active or passive. When it is active, the subject of the verb acts. Examples are:

- (1) Mary killed a goat.
- (2) John saw the boy.

In (1) above, Mary (the subject) performed the action, while in (2) John (the subject) performed the action. Can you identify the entities on which the actions were performed? What do we call the entity on which an action is performed?

In the passive voice, the action is performed on the subject. We can turn the examples (1) and (2) above into passive as follows:

- (3) A goat was killed by Mary.
- (4) The boy was seen by John.

There are two types of passive: agented passive and agent- less passive. In the agented passive, the agent of the action is indicated- it is introduced by the preposition “by”. Our examples (3) and (4) show agented passive. With the agent- less passive, the agent is not indicated. Look at the following:

- (5) A goat was killed.
- (6) The boy was seen.

In a text, a writer or speaker can choose between active and passive voice and when this is the case, you should be able to explain the stylistic effect. The choice may relate to the desire to express thematic meaning- that is, a way of organizing a message to indicate focus and/ or emphasis. This explains the difference in the information structure between:

(7) John saw the boy (active)

And

(8) The boy was seen by John (passive).

The difference is illustrated below:

Theme	Rheme
John The boy	saw the boy was seen by John

The theme indicates the “GIVEN” (i.e. what is already known) while the rheme states the “NEW” (i.e. the new information). The active form of the sentence above can be taken as an answer to the question: “Whom did John see?” Remember that in Chomsky’s (1965) *Aspects* model of Transformal-Generative Grammar, both the active and the passive forms of a sentence are said to have the same deep structure (i.e. meaning) despite their different surface structures, because transformation is said to be meaning- preserving. However, in the Extended Standard Theory (EST) of the grammar, a review of the *Aspects* model, there is the realization that the surface structure has some input into semantic determination; hence, transformation may not altogether be meaning-preserving.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Stylistic analysis at the syntactic level calls for a good understanding of the grammatical units of group, clause and sentence and how they function in a text. In other words, the ability to identify the units of grammar is not enough, one should be able to describe the stylistic significance of the units.

5.0 SUMMARY

What we have demonstrated, so far, are the general syntactic features that can be looked at in a text. However, the deployment of the features may not be exactly the same across the different genres of literature and non-literary texts. For example, while sentence description may be productive in the analysis of prose fiction, it may not be in poetry.

Therefore, it is important for you to be familiar with the form and the register of each text you study. You will learn more about register later in this course.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) What are the grammatical units relevant to a stylistic analysis at the syntactic level?
- (2) Mention and explain the elements of the English clause.
- (3) What is the structure of the English Nominal Group?
- (4) Undertake a stylistic analysis of the syntactic features of any text of your choice.

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UNIT 4 COHESION AND COHERENCE

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Meaning of Cohesion and Coherence
 - 3.2 Methods of Achieving Cohesion in Discourse
 - 3.3 Coherence in Discourse
 - 3.4 Stylistic Values of Cohesion and Coherence in Discourse
- 4.0 Conclusion
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

When we speak or write, we often use certain devices to create unity and relevance in what we communicate. When we talk of cohesion and coherence in a piece of communication, we refer to the phenomenon of achieving unity and relevance. This is our focus in this unit. Both cohesion and coherence are essential features of a text which define its textuality and relevance or meaningfulness.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) define cohesion and coherence;
- (ii) identify cohesive ties in texts; and
- (iii) analyse a text from the point of view of cohesion and coherence.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Meanings of Cohesion and Coherence

As observed by scholars (Quirk et al, 1985; Stern, 2001; Osisanwo, 2003), coherence has to do with sense. Therefore, when a text or discourse makes sense to a reader, the text is said to have coherence. Cohesion- from the Latin word for 'sticking together' (Stern. 2001:51) – is a term in functional grammar that relates to how texts (words and sentences) are held together lexically and grammatically as a whole. A text that lacks cohesion will be fragmented and disjointed. The following examples can be used to illustrate cohesion and coherence:

- (i) Mummy beat John. John had come home late, (coherent but not cohesive).
- (ii) Mummy beat John because he had come home late, (cohesive and coherent).

Notice that the conjunction, “because”, and the pronoun, “he” are the cohesive devices in sentence (ii) above. Both are known as the conjunctive cohesion and referential cohesion respectively.

- (iii) Mummy beat John because America is a developed country, (cohesive but not coherent).
- (iv) Mummy beat John. America is a developed country, (not cohesive and not coherent).

3.2 Methods of Achieving Cohesion in Discourse

There are five ways of giving a text cohesion. Let us first illustrate each of them before embarking on a detailed discussion.

1. **Referential Cohesion:** “I met with Samuel and he asked me to pay him a visit.” (‘He’ refers to Samuel).
2. **Conjunctive Cohesion:** “I saw him when I arrived.” (‘When’ is a conjunctive device).
3. **Elliptical Cohesion:** “She prayed and slept.” (‘She’ is left unsaid in the second clause).
4. **Substitutive Cohesion:** “Would you like a cup of tea? Yes, I’d like one.” (‘One’ replaces ‘a cup of tea’)
5. **Lexical Cohesion:** We all drank water after eating a good meal. (Drink and water collocate just as eat and meal).
6. Cohesion through parallelism: This obtains when a syntactic structure/ pattern is repeated.

1. **Referential cohesion** means using pronouns or determiners to refer to the known nouns in a text. Backward referencing is known as anaphoric reference while forward referencing is called cataphoric reference. In the following text the instances of each referential cohesion are underlined.

- (a) Jane had permanent booking at the Star Theatre but she decided not to go today, (‘she’ refers anaphorically to Jane).
- (b) After several years, as she approached another renewal of her vows, Melissa was called to an interview with a visiting French priest, (‘she’ and ‘her’ refer cataphorically to Melissa).

2. **Conjunctive cohesion:** This comprises the use of core conjunctions, basically involving the three coordinators, “AND”, “BUT”. “OR” and conjuncts which are of various kinds.

For example:

- (i) In the Ancient society, the people gathered together in the arena and made laws that guided the land.
- (ii) There are laws guiding the conduct of people in the society, but people break them in their propensity.
- (iii) Where people lived their wills; they have the choice to obey the law or break it.

In the examples above, the underlined linguistic items or coordinating conjunctions are used cohesively.

3. Elliptical cohesion

Ellipsis denotes a kind of substitution by zero. It deals with the omission of word(s) while, simultaneously, relying on the readers' minds to deduce and fill in the missing bits from what they have read (or heard before). It is used in discourse to avoid repetition and redundancy. In the following text, the words and expressions you can omit are in the brackets.

- (a) Tina looked back and (she) saw her parents. They were very happy, and she was (happy) as well. They were strolling along and she was (strolling along) too. Do you think they got there on time? Yes, I do. (think they got there on time).

Ellipsis can be realized at different clausal/sentential levels. Examples include:

- (b) Mary prayed and slept. (The subject "Mary" is ellipited in the second clause).
- (c) The rich are getting richer; the poor, poorer, (ellipsis at the verbal level "are getting").
- (d) He promised to be there yesterday and he was. (ellipsis at the adverbial level "there yesterday" is left unsaid in the second clause).

4. Substitution

This denotes replacing a linguistic item with another. For example:

Would you like a cup of coffee?
Yes, I'd like one.
(‘one’ replaces ‘a cup of coffee’).

5. Lexical cohesion

Lexical cohesion means using words to achieve unity in a text. There are four varieties of lexical cohesion:

- (a) **Repetition** (repeating the same word or words): Play, play, play: that's all you seem to do.
- (b) **Synonymy** (using words with similar meanings): I saw this large dog. You know, really huge.
- (c) **Antonymy** (using words with opposite meanings): Get educated! You can't always stay ignorant.
- (d) **Collocation** (using words that go with each other): My friend did me a great favour last week. Would you like a cup of coffee? No, I'd prefer tea.

6. **Parallelism** (this is repeating the same syntactic pattern/ structure). Examples are:

(1) "I came, I saw, I conquered". Here, the SP (Subject, Predicator) pattern is repeated.

(2) "United we stand, divided we fall." Here, CSP (Complement, Subject, Predicator) pattern is repeated.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Explain the parallelism in "To err is human, to forgive is divine."

3.3 Coherence in Discourse

Coherence manifests in discourse by the extent to which a particular instance of language use matches a shared knowledge of conventions as to how illocutionary acts are related to form large units of discourse (Widdowson, 1978). Unlike cohesion which is regarded as a linguistic means of establishing connectivity across sentences or utterances by what Widdowson refers to as formal syntactic and semantic signals, that is, cohesive ties, coherence establishes some relationship between utterances through an interpretation of illocutionary acts. The following constructed conversation explains the manifestations of coherence in discourse.

A: I have put the broom in the living room.

B: I'm eating my food.

A: Okay.

The above-constructed discourse can be interpreted vis-à-vis the social conventions of interaction which are identified as follows:

A requests B to perform an action.

B states the reason why he cannot comply.

A undertakes to perform the action.

It is very obvious that there are no cohesive features of utterance in the discourse featured above, hence, its not being analyzable from the perspective of cohesion. The cues needed

to identify coherence in a discourse are conventional structure of interaction and the knowledge of the world.

3.3 Stylistic Values of Cohesion and Coherence

Both cohesion and coherence constitute part of the features of textuality which a text must possess to be defined as a communicative piece. Both are stylistically valuable to the text as they assist it (the text) to exhibit logical consistency and clarity such as can enable the readers have a good grasp of it. Coherence accounts for the meaningfulness or relevance of a text, while cohesion defines the textuality of a text.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we should note that while coherence deals with sense, cohesion relates to unity. The concept of sense relates to the notion of meaningfulness or relevance. When we communicate, we create certain lexical and grammatical ties that bind our writing or speech together. Any piece of communication that is logical will be coherent. So watch for logicity in any piece of text you analyse stylistically.

5.0 SUMMARY

In order to undertake an effective stylistic analysis of any text you must pay attention to cohesion and coherence in the text. In doing this, we must have a good knowledge of the context of the text as well as its lexical and grammatical features. Creating relevance and unity in our texts makes communication more meaningful and logical.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) What do you understand by cohesion and coherence?
- (2) Analyse the following passage in terms of its cohesion and coherence.

Akpan: Do you mind a piece of advice?

Udoh: I don't mind any.

Akpan: Are you listening?

Udoh: Yes, I am.

Akpan: The only solution to the problem is National Conference. I said that because every group would say its mind and give its condition and terms for staying together. (Osisanwo, 2003: 30).

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UNIT 5 FOREGROUNDING

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- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main content
 - 3.1 Meaning of Foregrounding
 - 3.2 Two main types of Foregrounding
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Foregrounding is a popular concept in stylistics, especially in the analysis of the language of poetry. It was Garvin, according to Wales (1989), who introduced the term in 1964 to translate the Prague School's "aktualisace" which literally means "actualization" (p. 182). Foregrounding is now a popular notion in the study of stylistics generally.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (a) define the concept of foregrounding;
- (b) explain the stylistic importance of foregrounding; and
- (c) identify foregrounding in texts.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Meaning of Foregrounding

Foregrounding refers to the concept of making certain features prominent in a text. Some linguistic features can be made prominent for special effects against the background features in a text. Scholars have examined the term as used in the literary enterprise as being for purely aesthetic exploitation of language which has the aim of making what is familiar unfamiliar in order to attract attention. The concept of deviation is closely related to that of foregrounding in that what is foregrounded is made to deviate from the familiar pattern.

Also, when the content of a text has deviated from the norms of language use, then we can say that a style is being carved out. In the process of determining the area of deviation in the study of stylistics, one has to identify the different highlighted aspects that have been made prominent. Thus, foregrounding is related to the notion of deviation and it provides the basis for a reader's recognition of style. As Halliday (1994) says, foregrounding is prominence that is motivated. He also defines prominence as the general name for the phenomenon of linguistic highlights whereby some linguistic features stand out in some way. Thus, to Halliday, a feature that is brought into prominence will be

foregrounded only if it relates to the meaning of the whole text. He posits that foregrounding can be qualitative i.e. deviation from the language code, or quantitative, deviation from the expected frequency.

The purpose of foregrounding, linguistic or non-linguistic, is to add an unusual and unique idea, to the language. Thus, foregrounding can manifest in various ways in a text. These include unusual capitalization, italicization, bold words, contractions, underlining, picture/art works and so on. We can say that the use of these foregrounding devices creates some visual imagery which adds to the memorability of a text.

3.2 Two Main Types of Foregrounding

According to Wales (1989: 182), foregrounding can be achieved in a variety of ways usually grouped into two main types: deviation and repetition, that is, “paradigmatic” and “syntagmatic foregrounding.” Wales explains further that deviations are violations of linguistic norms, e.g. grammatical/semantic norms, strange metaphors, similes or collocations that are deployed to achieve special effects in a text, especially poetry, amount to foregrounding. Consider, for example, these lines from Okara’s “New Year’s Eve Midnight”:

“A year is born.”
“And my heart-bell is ringing.”

Here, a year is said to be born and a bell is said to be ringing in the poet’s heart!

Repetition is also said to be a kind of deviation as it flouts the “normal rules of usage by over-frequency” (Wales, 1989: 182). Repetition of sounds or syntactic patterns have the tendency to strike the readers as uncommon and thereby engage their attention. Such a device is seen at work in Senghor’s poem: “I will pronounce your name.” See the first line of the poem:

“I will pronounce your name, Naett, I will declaim you, Naett!

Lines two, three and four of the poem also continue with this form of foregrounding:

“Naett, your name is mild like cinnamon, it is the fragrance in which
the lemon grove sleeps,
Naett, your name is the sugared clarity of blooming coffee trees.”

As Wales hints, what is or is not foregrounded may be difficult to determine in some contexts since the elements of subjectivity may not be ruled out. When this seems to be the case, Wales advises the students of style to consider the “significance or effect of the foregrounded items...” (p. 183). Thus, we have to go beyond mere identification of the foregrounded elements and proceed to the level of their effects.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, foregrounding is stylistically significant in literary texts, especially poetry, but it is not limited to literary texts. Other texts such as advertisements, postals, obituary notices, etc. may also deploy foregrounding to create some effects. Any text that successfully deploys foregrounding becomes multi-semiotic or, multi-vocal, and its interpretation will call for a pluralistic approach.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have been able to point out that deviation and repetition are important means of achieving foregrounding. As students of stylistics, we need to go beyond mere recognition of foregrounded elements to consider their stylistic significance in a text. When an item is made prominent in a text by foregrounding it, the author wants to draw our attention to its significance.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) What is foregrounding?
- (2) Identify and discuss the foregrounded items in the following:
 - (a) This is 9ja talk, my mobile line.
 - (b) Please note that lecture **attendance** is **compulsory** if you want to pass.
 - (c) Let us unravel the meaning of Lilliput in Gulliver's Travels together.
 - (d) On JUNE 12 I stand.
 - (e) Read your *Bible* and pray everyday.
- (3) What do you think is the importance of foregrounding in any text?

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MODULE 3 BASIC GENRES OF LITERATURE AND THEIR ELEMENTS

UNIT 1 FORMS OF LITERATURE

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Prose-fiction
 - 3.2 Poetry
 - 3.3 Drama
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

When we talk about the “genres” of literature, we refer to typologies of creative writing based on form, outlook, structure and, to an extent, purpose. This invariably means that literature has different kinds, despite the fact that it has to do with inventive, imaginative writing. It is a common practice to classify literature into three main genres, namely: prose-fiction, poetry and drama. In this unit, we shall look at the three main classifications, namely prose, poetry and drama in relation to stylistics.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) identify the three basic forms of literature;
- (ii) describe the features of each of the three basic forms of literature;
- (iii) mention some types of drama; and
- (iv) explain some types/forms of poetry.

3.1 Prose-Fiction

Among the genres of literature, prose-fiction is the one that most resembles our conventional, everyday kind of story telling activity. A writer of prose-fiction basically narrates a story in a continuous form as any teller of folktales, or any narrator of an exciting event or episode would.

The main instrument for presenting prose-fiction is narration and the person who writes the prose work may be the narrator of the story, telling the readers (the audience) what happened, to whom, why it happened and at what time it happened. Prose-fiction is arguably the commonest and most patronized form of literature in the modern world. But

it shares a lot with the story traditions of the ancient world which comes in the form of myths, parables, romances, fables, folktales, etc, and which are all also narrative in form.

Prose-fiction is made up of the novel, the novella and the short story, all of which are narrative in form. The commonest among the forms of prose fiction is the novel, which is also the lengthiest of the three. Palmer defines it as a “compact, coherent (and) unified fictitious prose narrative having a beginning, a middle and an end” (Palmer, 1986:1). Palmer goes ahead to say that the novel deploys materials and information in such a way as to give the image of coherence, continuity and wholeness, and with certain tensions.

Interestingly, the novel is the newest among the literary forms, coming into life after poetry and drama had become established literary genres. Though there have been arguments that the novel existed in several forms in the English, Italian, Greek and Roman literary traditions before the eighteenth century, critics have cited Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1919) as the world’s first novel. The novel has grown from those humble beginnings characterized by uncertainty to become the world’s most popular literary form today. The essential distinguishing factor between the **novel**, the **novella** and the **short story** has to do with length/volume. The **novel** is basically longer than the novella, while the short story is the shortest of the three. **The novella**, a subgenre of prose-fiction, is a very difficult form to describe, shorter than the novel and longer than the short story.

From the above view, it is clear that the novella is closer to the novel than the short story. Like the novel, the novella tries to capture life and experiences in some detail, even if this chronicle ends up being shorter than the novel. It is more difficult to distinguish between the novel and the novella than between the short story and the novella. That is why the novella is a much restricted form of literature, being represented by a small body of output. Famous examples of the novella form include Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Henry James’ *The Turn of the Screw* and Alex La Guma’s *A Walk in the Night*.

The short story has been described as the form of prose-fiction which narrates fundamentally, just one event, or an aspect of one event, making an immediate impact on its reader in the process. Millet sees the short story as an imaginative “account of a happening” (1950: 8). For Millet, “the short story tends to focus attention on not more than a single central character” (1950: 8). The short story became a much patronized literary form in the apartheid South Africa because the South African chaotic and volatile environment of the fascist regime provided writers like Lewis Nkosi, Bloke Modiasane, Ezekiel Mphahlele, etc, with neither the rest of mind nor the peaceful atmosphere to indulge in anything longer.

3.2 Poetry

We often say that literature provides its writer with a medium to pour out his emotions and feelings. No other genre of *literature can help the* writer achieve this more

effectively and more convincingly than the poetic form. Good poetry has always been said to come from the soul and not the head, because it talks about very strong feelings coming from the inspired mind which may not find proper and appropriate expressions under ordinary, less inspired situations. In his often-quoted description of poetry which appears in the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, William Wordsworth sees good poetry as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” and strong “emotion recollected in tranquility” (Abrams, 1981; 1 15). Consider a situation where a woman sings a song of lament on the occasion of her dead husband’s funeral. Wole Soyinka writes the poems that gave birth to the collection *A Shuttle in the Crypt* with a tortured mind filled with the anger, pain and bitterness of incarceration during the Nigerian-Biafran war.

Language is the most distinctive factor in the poetic form, *it* is dense and concentrated, supercharged with meanings (Chace and Collier, 1985: 393). For Chace and Collier, the main characteristics of poetry are verse, sound, and compression of statements. Moreover, for Chace and Collier the careful and ingenious manipulation of the lines of a poetic rendition, taking into consideration the effects of the combination of and systematic variation in the flow of sound, and the restriction of the amount of words to the fewest possible, guarantees good poetry.

We have different forms of poetry. The **epic** is one of the oldest poetic forms which dates back to the earliest periods of the pre-literate story telling world. An epic is a poem that tells a long story about the great deeds of a great individual or group of individuals at one point or the other in the process of their development as a people. Abrams defines the epic as a heroic poem that is long and narrative in nature, which deals with a “great and serious subject, related in an elevated style, and centred on a heroic or quasi-divine figure whose actions depends on the fate of a tribe, a nation, or the human race” (1981: 50). Examples of the epic are Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil’s Latin poem, *The Aeneid*, John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*, etc. In Africa, we also know about the existence of certain well-received epics. Daniel Biebuyck and K. Mateene have translated and transcribed *The Mwindo Epic* of the old Zairean people; D.T. Niane has done the same in *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*, while J.P Clark has done likewise for the Ijaw of Nigeria with *The Ozidi Saga*.

The **elegy** is a poem that is used to lament the death of a person. Abrams defines it as “a formal and sustained lament (and usually consolation) for the death of a particular person”. The dirge, like the elegy, is also a poem of lament that “expresses grief on the occasion of someone’s death, but differs from the elegy in that it is short or less formal, and is usually represented as a text to be sung” (1981: 47). There is also the **lyrical** poem, a type of poem that is sung and/or accompanied by the playing of musical instrument, at least in its original Greek form. The lyric has grown and developed to embrace other descriptions in more modern periods. Examples of lyrical poetry include John Keats *Ode to Autumn*, Matthew Arnold’s *Dover Beach*, Kofi Awoonor’s *Songs of Sorrow*, J.P. Clark’s *Agbor Dancer*, etc.

Other kinds of poetry include **panegyric** poetry (a kind of poem that sings the praise of a person or thing), occasional poetry (a poem that is written to mark a special occasion), a **sonnet** (a fourteen-line poem divided into the octave (the first eight lines and the sestet (the last six lines)). The knowledge of the different forms and traditions of poetry is necessary to carry out a stylistic analysis of poetry.

3.3 Drama

Drama is the most presentational of the three genres of literature. This is because while other forms of literature are essentially designed to convey their messages in words, drama is designed to present its statements in a combination of action and words. In drama, characters assume life and act out the story of the play. This is why drama has been variously described as the genre of literature that is closest to life and that has the most immediate impact on the audience. The closeness one feels when one sees a story unfolds in one's very presence, or performed by human beings like oneself is definitely greater than what one feels when one reads the same story in black and white. Even when plays are written in black and white, they are written with the intention of being eventually presented on stage. A play is therefore a work for an audience which gives its spectators a close feeling that they are part of what is happening on stage.

The dramatic form of literature basically has three broad subgenres, namely: **tragedy, comedy and tragi-comedy**. There is a vast array of other forms associated with the fundamental ones listed above.

Ordinarily speaking, a **tragic** story should be one that ends so sadly that the audience cannot help but feel pity for the characters, for the misfortune they have suffered. Tragedy, then, is a representation of an action that is worthy of serious attention, complete in itself, and of some amplitude; in language enriched by variety of artistic devices appropriate to the several parts of the play; presented in the form of action, not narration; by means of pity and fear, bringing about the purgation of such emotion (see Dasylva 2004: 26).

For Aristotle, tragedy does not begin and end at being a story that concludes on a sad note. In addition to the above, it must be the story of how an elevated member of the society falls from grace to grass, ends up in shame, humiliation or even death because of a combination of his behavioural shortcomings (tragic flaws) and the influence of supernatural forces. For Aristotle, a person who is not distinguished in the society cannot be a tragic hero, because his tragedy cannot be of any significance to the human society.

The **tragicomic** subgenre of drama was popularized by the prolific and extravagantly talented English dramatist and playwright, William Shakespeare, who is also widely reputed as one of the world's greatest literary figures of all time.

A **comic** play is a dramatic presentation that not only ends on a light-hearted note with no serious misfortune such as hurt and death to the major characters, but is also designed to

create and involve humour. In spite of the fact that comedy has been thought to have no social function, it has been proved that the comic play can teach moral lessons and make concrete sociopolitical and economic statements.

Just as the knowledge of the forms and traditions of poetry is essential in order to analyse a poem meaningfully, the knowledge of the forms and traditions of drama is equally important to do a good stylistic analysis of a dramatic piece. Again, you need to note that pragmatic stylistics is very relevant to a stylistic analysis of drama because drama relies on actions.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have examined the three basic forms of literature: prose, poetry and drama. While each type has its own peculiarities, you need to note that the features of one may be borrowed into another. For example, there may be a poetic prose or a dramatic poetry. The presence of some of the features of one genre of literature (i.e. form) in another signals what is called intertextuality.

5.0 SUMMARY

Apart from the message it contains, literature, in its three basic forms, is significant for its methods of expression – hence, the emphasis on the language of literature. The two i.e. message and language should form the focus of a stylistic analysis of any piece of literature, be it prose, poetry or drama. We shall revisit each of the three basic forms of literature as we progress in this course.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) What are the three basic forms of literature? Give an example of each.
- (2) Describe the basic features of each form of literature.
- (3) Mention and explain some types of drama.
- (4) Explain at least two types/forms of poetry, giving appropriate examples.

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UNIT 2 ELEMENTS OF PROSE

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Definition of Prose Fiction
 - 3.2 Elements of Prose Fiction
- 4.0 Conclusion
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Prose fiction is one of the three divisions of literature and it is regarded as the most accessible of all the three genres. The term prose is more often equated with the novel. This may not be wrong, but it is not entirely correct. Prose may refer to all works of imagination not patterned in the verse form. Generally, prose fiction is literature in the narrative form.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) define prose fiction;
- (ii) identify the major elements of prose fiction; and
- (iii) carry out an analysis of a prose text, in terms of its significant elements.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition of Prose Fiction

A prose work is any written story of a considerable length which consists of paragraphs and chapters. The story narrated can be real or imagined. If real, then the story is said to be factual, (that is, non-fiction) If imagined, the story is said to be fictional. Prose fiction subsumes (i) the short story (ii) the novelette or short novel (some people prefer the Italian name, novella) and (iii) the full-length novel.

Of all the three forms of prose fiction, the short story is the shortest in length. Apart from this, it shares all the essential elements of the other two that are longer in length.

3.2 Elements of Prose Fiction

The following are the important elements of prose fiction as a genre of literature:

- (a) characters and characterization
- (b) plot
- (c) setting
- (d) theme
- (e) point of view
- (e) conflict
- (g) language.

(a) Characters and Characterization

Characters are the agents of actions while characterization refers to the method of projecting the characters. There are two broad types of characters in a narrative fiction: (i) flat character and (ii) round character.

A flat character is created around a single idea or quality. He is very easy to describe as he is simple in thoughts and actions. He/she does not change in the course of the story. Unlike the flat character, a round character is complex in thoughts and actions and so cannot be described as easily as the flat character. Like human beings in real life, he cannot be predicted with a high degree of accuracy.

Characters may be portrayed either by telling or by showing. By telling, the author tells us everything about the characters but by showing, the author allows the characters to interact and by that we know them, through what they do and say as well as what others say about them.

(b) Plot

This is the ordering of the events in a novel towards the achievement of a particular effect. The plot means more than the story. It is also the way the story is ordered and rendered. The plot of a story may be chronological. At times, a story may be dislocated in time order. The technique of flashback dislocates events in terms of time.

(c) Setting

This refers to where and when the activities in the story take place. It is not limited to the physical environment only; it includes the social circumstances i.e. the atmosphere and the time the action occurs. For example, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is set in the traditional Igbo society of Nigeria, at the time Christianity was making its way into the society.

(d) Theme

The theme of a work is the philosophical underpinning of the work and it is deduced from the subject matter. One of the themes of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, for example, is culture conflict. Okonkwo, the hero, is caught up in the conflict and because of his rigidity, he does not survive it.

(e) Point of View

This is the perspective from which the action, story and characters get revealed to the reader. The point of view of a work can be:

- (i) **First person:** Here, the narrator is usually one of the characters and usually the chief character and through his eyes we see the events in the story: The signal word here is the use of the pronoun "I". For example, Charles Dickens' *Great*

Expectations is written from the eyes of Pip, the major character. Through his eyes, we see his life and that of other characters in the novel.

- (ii) **Third person point of view:** Here we see the work from the point of view of the author who acts as the omniscient narrator. Like God, he is the creator of the characters and so sees their thoughts and tells us why they do what they do. For example, Elechi Amadi's novel *The Concubine* is written from this point of view. In addition, there can also be multiple points of view. This is seen in Ngugu's *A Grain of Wheat and Petals of Blood*. You will learn more about point of view later in this course, especially in unit 12 and 18.

(f) Conflict

Conflict is the backbone of the plot in a prose fiction. It is the moving force and it holds the plot tightly together. Conflicts arise when two forces pull the opposite ways. The conflicts could be either internal or external. It is internal if it concerns inner emotional struggle like the urge in a person to want to do either good or bad and without a firm grip on which of the two to hold on to. If it is external, it is inter-personal, involving two or more people and opposing forces. Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* contains a lot of inter-personal conflicts.

(g) Language

This is the most important element of prose. It is language that gives expression to other elements of prose. In looking at the language of prose, there are two important dimensions: the authorial language and the language of the characters in the story. One important means of characterisation is the language which the author makes the characters to speak.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Prose fiction is characterized by such elements as characters and characterisation, plot, theme, setting, point of view, conflict and language. But of all the elements of prose, language is the most important because it is through language that other elements come into life.

5.0 SUMMARY

In order to do a good stylistic analysis of a prose fiction, it is necessary to be familiar with the essential elements of prose. While the elements may also be present in the other forms of literature, they will have different significance. But you should remember that one form of literature may be borrowed into another. When this happens, we have a feature of intertextuality – i.e. the tendency of a text to repeat another text.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (i) What is prose fiction?
- (ii) Identify the major elements of prose fiction.
- (iii) Analyse any prose fiction of your choice in terms of its elements.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 ELEMENTS OF POETRY

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Poetry
 - 3.2 What kind of poetry?
 - 3.3 Persona
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 - 3.5 Sound patterns
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Poetry is different from other forms of literature because of its use of the resources of language and music. According to Akporobaro (2008: 12), “poetry applies to the many forms in which man has given a rhythmic expression into his imaginative and intense perceptions of his world...” When analyzing a poem, one must pay attention to these resources. So, in appreciating poetry, attention must be paid to diction, imagery, sound effects and sound patterns. These will be discussed presently.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) define poetry;
- (ii) explain the uniqueness of poetry as a form of literature;
- (iii) identify some elements of poetry; and
- (iv) carry out a stylistic analysis of a poem.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Poetry

Poetry is literature and as literature it is “a method of expression” (Egudu 1977: 4). Poetry is unique because it stems out directly from man’s experience of his world of consciousness. So, appreciating poetry is an attempt at discovering the uniqueness, variety and intensity of human experience. Put directly, poetry is a special use of language to express intense feelings. Nobody can say categorically how poetry originated, but we know certainly that it is part and parcel of man’s life.

3.2 What Kind of Poetry?

There are different kinds of poetry categorised along the lines of age, types, region and form. Along the line of types (traditions), we can have epic poetry, medieval poetry

(romance), metaphysical poetry, neoclassical poetry, romantic poetry and modern poetry. Along the line of forms, we have narrative poetry, satirical poetry, dramatic poetry, the ballad, lyric poetry, sonnet, pastoral and elegy, etc. Whatever type of poem we study, we expect it to have a subject-matter and themes. The subject-matter relates to the explicit issues contained in the poem, while the theme(s) is the implicit message deduced from the subject-matter. Although, what is said in a poem is important, how it is said is definitely more important.

3.3 Persona

The voices we hear most of the times in poems are not always those of the poets. Poets sometimes adopt the identity of some other person(s), real or imaginary, in a particular situation, also real or imaginary. Whenever a poet adopts someone else's personality or uses this device, he is said to be adopting a persona. So, in examining a poem, we must first of all identify the voice. We need to know whether it is the poet speaking directly or the poet is speaking through another voice. For example, in his poem entitled "Àbíkú", Soyinka speaks through the voice of an 'àbíkú' – a child born to die prematurely.

3.4 Imagery

Imagery as a term is difficult to describe with precision because of the way it is used loosely. In a broad sense, it can be used to describe any writing which is descriptive, and helps the reader to visualise a scene and so to experience the poet's experience. We have both aural and visual imagery.

Imagery depends on the emotive power of words for its success. The most condensed form of imagery can be found in figures of speech although not all figures of speech involve visual imagery. Alliteration, for example, has to do with sound effects. Others, such as antithesis and anti-climax, have to do with arrangement of ideas.

Metaphor and simile, when they are well used, represent imagery at its most concise manner. Other figures of speech that can perform this function are hyperbole, euphemism, irony, personification, metonymy, synecdoche, etc. Another extreme form of imagery is in the use of *symbolism*. *Symbolism* is a use of language in which an image represents something visual, but also often a vast number of other ideas which the poet associates with the word. This will also remind you of the connotative dimension of word meaning. Connotation is a means of creating imagery, and it is often exploited fully in poetry.

3.5 Sound Patterns

Most poetry in English is based on rhythmical patterns. Despite the fact that these patterns exist in all utterances, some kind of irregularity is often imposed on the patterns in poetry. These patterns can be called the rhythm. Rhythm is expressed by a series of syllables, some of which are stressed and some unstressed. Stress, you will remember, is the emphasis placed on a sound or syllable by pronouncing it more loudly or forcefully than those surrounding it in the same word or phrase. In poetry, it means the emphasis

placed on a syllable or a word as part of the rhythm of a poem or line of poetry. In poetry, there are four basic patterns:

- (1) Iambic rhythm: Each 'foot' consists of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.
- (2) Trochaic rhythm: It consists of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable.
- (3) Anapaestic rhythm: Each foot consists of two unstressed syllables followed by one stressed syllable.
- (4) Dactylic rhythm has each foot consisting of a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables.

You need to note that 'a foot' is said to begin with a stressed syllable and extends to but excludes the following stressed syllable.

Among these four, the most common in English poetry is the iambic rhythm:

3.6 Sound Effects

With the use of special sound patterns and sound imagery, certain sound effects can be created, namely,

Onomatopoeia: This is the most obvious of all sound effects. It is the use of words whose sounds suggest their meanings. The most simple examples are words which are the names given to actual sounds. For example, some bells *ring, tinkle, clang*; a cat *mews*, a lion *roars* and cars *screech*. There can also be a *splash* of water and a *booming* of a gun.

Alliteration: This is closely related to onomatopoeia. It is the use of a succession of the same consonant, usually at the beginning of successive words. These are few examples:

- (1) I *bubble* into eddying *bays*
- (2) I *babble* on *the pebbles*
- (3) God makes man; man makes money; money makes many men mad.

Rhyme: This has to do with the recurring use of similar vowel sounds, especially at the end of lines of a poem. Rhyme, like alliteration, attracts the reader's attention to something of importance in a poem. If two lines of a poem end with "face" and "grace", we will say that the lines exhibit end rhyme. Can you describe the pattern of end rhyme in J.P. Clark's "Streamside Exchange"?

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is not only what is said in poetry that is of significance. The manner in which it is said is of a special importance. In fact, like we have said, poetry deploys language in a special way. Therefore, the style of a poem generally will be suggestive of the message(s) it expresses and language is the major exponent of this style. A poet enjoys what is called 'poetic liberty' i.e. the freedom to use language in a unique and creative way, without being tied down to the rules of grammatical correctness.

5.0 SUMMARY

In order to do a stylistic analysis of a poem, you need to read the poem carefully, paying close attention to the title, language, form and the general style of the poem. Poetry calls for a creative use of language and its analysis must also be rigorous and creative. A poet sees with inner eyes and a meaningful analysis of any form of poetry must be deep and insightful.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is poetry?
2. List three important elements of poetry.
3. Explain the uniqueness of poetry as a form of literature.
4. Carry out a stylistic analysis of J.P. Clark's "Streamside Exchange."

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UNIT 4 ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Definition of Drama
 - 3.2 Enactment of Drama
 - 3.3 Types of Drama
 - 3.4 Elements of Drama
 - 3.5 Some Basic Terms in Drama
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be introduced to drama and its basic elements. This is necessary because as a student of stylistics, it is important that you should be familiar with certain dramatic or literary tools which any student wishing to analyse a piece of drama must know. Drama is an important form of literature which relies on performance.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) define drama;
- (ii) list and explain the basic elements of drama; and
- (iii) carry out a stylistic analysis of a piece of drama.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition of Drama

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English(2000) defines drama as “a play for a theatre...” and “plays considered as a form of literature”. This definition identifies two aspects of drama i.e. the written form (i.e. drama textbooks) and the staged plays. According to Eghagha (2001: 468), drama is “any work of art created to be performed on stage, which, through the aid of characters and actions, convey a message to an audience, for the purpose of education, entertainment and information.” Drama is seen as imitation of reality in the Aristotelian perspective. It is seen as a recreation of life on stage.

3.2 Enactment of Drama

Drama, by its nature, is enacted through actions. This is achieved through a conflict between the protagonist and an antagonist. When the conflict gets to the peak, we have the climax. It is in a bid to resolve this conflict that the plot is enriched. After the climax,

we have what is called the denouement which may be regarded as the clarification of the plot. The enactment of drama makes drama a performing art.

3.3 Types of Drama

There are various types of drama such as tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, melodrama and farce. Tragedy is primarily a form of drama that ends in sadness. This is because the tragic hero has a downfall in which some lesson is learnt by the audience; but he, himself, falls as a result of the hubris or his weak point; for example, King Odewale in *The gods are not to blame*. A comedy, on the other hand, is a form of drama that typically ends in happiness. It is replete with satire and folly. One example of comedy is Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*. Tragicomedy blends both tragic and comic elements in that though the play has a tragic tone it ends happily. An example is Shakespeare's, *Much Ado About Nothing*. Melodrama is a play heightened by suspense and romantic sentiments. An example is *The Blinkards* by Kobika Sekyi.

3.4 Elements of Drama

The elements of drama are the essential features that we expect any form of drama to possess. These include:

Plot

The plot is the sequential arrangement of events in a play. It is said to be linear when there is a kind of chronological or sequential events in the play. On the other hand, we may have a play in which time order is dislocated. This happens, for example, when we have flashbacks.

Theme

This is the message of the play or what the play is all about. It is possible to have a theme and, or, multiple themes in one play. The theme is the philosophical underpinning of a play. It is derived from the plot of the play. One major theme in Ola Rotimi's *The gods are not to blame*, for example, is predestination.

Conflict

This is the bone of contention between the protagonist and the antagonist. There is a conflict when two forces pull the opposite ways. Conflict can be inter-personal or intra-personal. Actions are generated through conflict. In Ola Rotimi's *The gods are not to blame*, there are conflicts between characters and characters as well as between characters and supernatural forces.

Characters/Characterisation

The agents responsible for actions and conflicts in plays are known as characters. It is the formation of the characters by a playwright that is known as characterization. It should be noted that the characters can be human agents as in most plays and they can be animal agents.

Language

The language of drama is the exchange means or communicative method adopted in the play. Azeez (2001) identifies three types viz. verbal (spoken), gestural (paralinguistic like nodding, eyeing etc) and symbolic (semiotic). Language gives expression to other elements of drama. The language of drama may be poetic or prosaic.

Setting

This involves the location of the play. It may be divided into three: time, place and atmosphere. Time relates to when the action takes place, place indicates the location of the action in terms of physical space while atmosphere describes the socio-psychological mood of the play.

3.5 Some Basic Terms in Drama

Below are some terminologies that are associated with drama and which you may find necessary to use when analysing a play.

- (a) **Cast:** It is a list of actors and actresses given defined roles in a drama by the playwright or director.
- (b) **Playwright:** A playwright is the writer of a piece of drama or play.
- (c) **Conflict:** This involves the protagonist and the antagonist in their rivalry and struggle for assertion of influence or relevance in a piece of drama.
- (d) **Protagonist:** A character who plays the most prominent role in a play. A protagonist is also often referred to as the hero (man) or heroine (woman) or the chief character.
- (e) **Antagonist:** He/she is a character in a play who opposes the protagonist rightly or wrongly. Often he/she contradicts the protagonist.
- (f) **Denouement:** It is also known as the resolution or the unknitting of events, it is the resultant process soon after the climax has been reached. Here, the conflict in a play is finally resolved.
- (g) **Catharsis:** This means purgation (from 'purging', the original Greek word). It is the feeling by an audience of a sense of release or the cleansing of the mind of excess emotion, often through the shedding of tears as when a great tragedy is being played out on stage.
- (h) **Tragic Flaw:** It is a costly mistake made by the protagonist in a play or drama. It could also mean an inbuilt or inherited weakness (flaw), say pride (hubris), which aids the downfall of the protagonist. The tragic flaw in Hamlet the character in Shakespeare's Hamlet is indecision.
- (i) **Dramatic Irony:** It is a situation in a drama in which a character, out of ignorance, says or does something which runs counter to the course of action whose real outcome is known to the audience, but is hidden from the character in question.

- (j) **Suspense:** It is the state of anxiety and expectation in the reader/audience of a play as to the likely outcome of events. It raises a reader's interest and keeps him/her guessing as to what will happen next.
- (k) **Soliloquy:** It is a device in drama which allows a character to engage in a loud self-talk which enables the reader/audience to have access to what is in his/her mind.
- (l) **Prologue:** It is the formal introduction to a play written in prose or verse whose content is relevant to the unfolding events in the play. This device is used in Ola Rotimi's *The gods are not to blame*, for example,
- (m) **Epilogue:** It is the closing comment in a play which justifies an earlier course of action or fills an untreated gap. The device is used in The Rivals. Who is the author of The Rivals?
- (n) **Chorus:** It is a couple or a band of people in a play who takes it upon themselves as a group to comment on the proceedings of dramatic actions. The group sheds light on the unfolding events and prepares the audience for what is to follow.
- (o) **Flashback:** This is literary technique involving the recalling of an earlier scene, action, or event which sheds further light on what is currently happening. Wole Soyinka is fond of using this device.
- (p) **Director:** The theatre artist who directs the speech, movement and actions of the actors and actresses in the interpretation of the different characters in the play is called a director.
- (q) **Producer:** In stage drama, this refers to the person or organisation who brings the performance about and also funds it.
- (r) **Interlude:** A brief performance which serves as an interval to a main performance.
- (s) **Prompter:** During a performance, the prompter is the person who stays out of sight to remind an actor or actress of lines which escape his or her memory, to ensure the continuity of actions.
- (t) **Role Play:** The playing of a specific role in a dramatic activity without fully transforming into character. This is different from acting which involves a total transformation of a character. In role playing, the personality of the performer does not fully dissolve into the role being played.
- (u) **Audition:** The process by which actors and actresses are chosen for specific roles in a performance. This partly involves the reading of lines from the play to the hearing of the director.
- (v) **Climax:** The climax of a play is the moment of greatest tension when the conflict attains its peak and is now fully ripe to be resolved.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is no easy task to undertake a proper stylistic analysis of a drama text. The analyst therefore must be armed with the different dramatic elements treated here in order to do a good job. In addition, it should be noted that pragmatic stylistics is necessarily involved

in the stylistic analysis of drama because drama utilizes some extralinguistic factors to achieve some dramatic effects.

5.0 SUMMARY

So far, we have identified important dramatic elements in this unit. These include plot, theme, characters/characterization, conflict, language and setting. A good mastery of these will enhance your stylistic analysis of any piece of drama. Again, we have emphasized that drama exists in actions. It is performed literature. While other forms of literature may be personal, drama is social and it is the most collaborative art form in the sense that it needs the services of many people to come to life on stage.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) What is drama?
- (2) Identify and explain the major elements of drama.
- (3) Carry out a stylistic analysis of Ola Rotimi's *The gods are not to Blame*.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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MODULE 4 THE LANGUAGE OF LITERATURE

UNIT 1 THE LANGUAGE OF LITERATURE (I) (The Language of Prose)

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
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- 3.0 Main Content
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 - 3.2 Linguistic Checklist for Prose
 - 3.3 I - Narrator
 - 3.4 Third Person Narrator
 - 3.5 Linguistic Indications of Point of View
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall discuss the language of prose, especially from a linguistic perspective. Therefore, we shall examine linguistic checklist for reading prose by looking at the narrative style. We shall examine the linguistic indicators of view points and how they aid the understanding of the language of prose.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) explain point of view;
- (ii) define foregrounding;
- (iii) describe the language of prose fiction generally; and
- (iv) carry out a stylistic analysis of the language of any prose fiction of your choice.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Language of Literature

It is difficult to categorically point out what the language of literature is. Simpson (1997) contends that there is no such thing as a literary language. This implies that there are no items of modern English vocabulary or grammar that are inherently and exclusively literary. It is practically difficult to make a clear-cut linguistic distinction between literature and other subjects. In fact, Simpson stresses that the concept of literary language is a “Chimera”. Despite the wide assumption to the contrary, there are no

particular linguistic features or sets of linguistic features, which are found in literature that cannot be found in other kinds of text, for example, a religious text.

In the same vein, Fowler (1981) contends that literature is not a distinct variety. Any of the texts, which are regarded as literary, can be analysed as being built out of one or more varieties just as other texts. Some of the language varieties used in specific literary texts may tend to occur regularly in some, but not all other texts. For instance, rhyme and alliteration are found in advertisements and burial orations. 'Literary' texts also draw upon patterns, which tend to occur in 'non-literary' texts (e.g. conversation and news report).

However, in literary circles, as well as linguistic description of the use of language, we can talk about the language of Shakespeare, Clark, Achebe, Soyinka, Osundare, Dickens, Marlowe and other great literary giants. Thus, their language, by implication, is of literary suggestions. Widdowson (1975: 47) argues that "what does seem crucial to the character of literature is that the language of a literary work should be fashioned into patterns over and above those required by the actual language system". Literary language has no ontological definition, i.e., it has no permanent or fixed existence. The term literary is a functional description not an ontological one. It is a quality conferred upon words not for what they are, but for what they do in the context of literature (Short, 1996).

It is, however, expedient to note that denying the existence of literary language is like denying the very existence of literature as a discipline (Bradford, 1994). Expanding Bradford's views, Aboh (2008: 29) argues that "literary text, rather than manifests a uniform language variety, derives its effectiveness from its unique exploitation of the mechanisms of the entire linguistic repertoire". Literary communication, therefore, works not on the presence of a clearly defined linguistic code but on the very absence of such a code (Widdowson, 1975).

We may have noticed that in ordinary communication, we use language to make reference to all sorts of items in the material world around us. In this function, "language is ephemeral, because we tend to forget about it the moment we have identified the items referred to" (Simpson, 1997: 13). This use of language for efficient and effective communication is commonplace. But when language does not refer to our everyday social life, and when it is the only thing available to us to construct an imaginary context, then things are entirely different. For instance, a person, who is so hungry might choose to be literary by the virtue of his linguistic choice:

I am so hungry that I could finish a cow.

Instead of:

I am so hungry I could finish two plates of ‘amala’ (Amala is a Yoruba food).

3.2 The Language of Prose

According to Thornborrow and Wareing (1998: 146), fiction is a generic term that includes short stories, novellas and novels. Our discussion in this unit shall focus on the language of the three sub-genres of prose fiction. Thornborrow and Wareing (1998: 183) provide a checklist for one who is interested in doing a stylistic analysis of prose. The checklist is as follows:

- Does the text appear to be “readerly” or ‘writerly’? What sort of demands does it make on the reader? For example, what effort will it take you to read Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Wole Soyinka’s *The Interpreters*? Which of these texts do you think is “readerly” and which is “writerly?”
- What kind of narrative voice, or voices, are there in the text? Is it first person or third person?
- What are the linguistic devices used to represent time, place and dialogue in the text?
- Is there any “foregrounding” of specific linguistic form - i.e., does the writer draw attention to the language of the text, for example, through changes in register, or the use of structural or lexical patterning?
- What is the structure of the plot, and narrative development? For example, is there a resolution, or ending, or no narrative closure? Is the story linear, or does the writer represent events in a non-linear way?

In general, the novel, as said earlier, is much more accessible than any of the other two major literary genres. However, in spite of its accessibility, the novel is probably the most difficult genre to analyse. It is, by far, the most complex genre in terms of discourse structure, which leads to its complexity in terms of view point. Short (1996) says that the study of point of view is central to the study of the novel.

3.3 “I”-narrator

The person who tells the story may also be a character in the fictional world of the story, reciting the story after the event. In this case, critics call the narrator a first-person or I-narrator. When the narrator refers to himself or herself in the story, the first-person pronoun “I” is used. Since the narrator is a character looking back on events, but often representing them as if they were happening for the first time, first person narrators are said to be limited (they don’t know all the facts) or (they trick the reader by withholding information or telling untruth.) This sort of thing often happens in murder and mystery stories. For example, in Achebe’s *A Man of the People*, the I-narrator is used. We only get information about events of the story through the central character, Obi Okonkwo. When Obi tells us the political situation and his pitiable involvement, because he is the first person narrator, we are forced to sympathize with him.

3.4 The Third-person Narrator

If the narrator is not a character in the fictional world, he or she is usually called a 'third-person' narrator, because reference to all the characters in the fictional world of the story will involve the use of the third-person pronouns, 'he', 'she', 'it' or 'they'. The third-person narrator is the dominant narrator type.

It is because first-person narrators can also be characters that they can easily be unreliable. The third-person narrators, because they can often be assumed to be the authors, are much more usually omniscient. Hence, when a third-person narrator is limited or unreliable the effect is very heavily foregrounded. Narrators usually tell us things, and so most of the sentences in novels are statements.

3.5 Linguistic Indications of View Point

(a) Deixis

Deixis is the term which linguists use to denote 'pointing expressions' like 'this' and 'that' or 'here' and 'there' which are speaker-related. To Carter et al., (1997: 152), deictics are directing or pointing words in so far as they direct our attention to particular point of reference. Deictic expressions cut across the grammar of English. For example, 'this' and 'that' are demonstrative determiners or pronouns, 'here' and 'there' are deictic adverbs, and 'come' (movement towards the speaker) and 'go' (movement not towards the speaker) are deictic verbs. Deixis applies to time as well as space, as the contrasts between the adverbs 'now' (time close to the speaker) and 'then' (time remote from the speaker) show. Because deixis is speaker-related, it can easily be used to indicate particular, and changing, view points, thereby influencing the meaning of the novel.

(b) Given Versus New Information

Linguists make a distinction between what they call *given* and *new* information, in terms of how information is arranged by speakers. If you want to refer to something which is not already known to your addressee, you will typically use indefinite reference, whereas if what you want to refer to is already known to your addressee, you will use the definite reference. In other words, you take your addressee's viewpoint into account.

The indefinite article 'a' is used to refer to something 'new' something we do not yet know about. For example, one can say:

(a) I saw a man.

(The man is unknown to the hearer). But if I say:

(b) The man is my friend's father. (The man is known to the hearer).

The definite article ‘the’ is ‘given’ because both the speaker and the hearer have some background information about the man unlike in sentence (a). It follows that ‘the’ is used to describe general information.

Many modern novels and stories begin with definite reference, even though in theory they should not. This technique, positioning readers as already “in the known”, even though they are not really, is one aspect of a technique which has come to be called ‘*in medias res*’ (Latin for ‘into the middle of things’.), which helps us feel intimately involved with what is going on at the beginning of a story.

(c) **Foregrounding**

Deviation, which is a linguistic phenomenon, has an important psychological effect on readers. If a part of a writing is deviant, it becomes especially noticeable, or perceptually prominent. This is called *foregrounding*. The term ‘foregrounding’, according to Short (1996: 11) is borrowed from art criticism. It implies that nothing in a work of art is insignificant, but the fact is that the matter in the foreground is more important than the rest.

In the language of prose, there is a background. The background is what is linguistically normal – the rules, norms and expectations which we associate with a particular kind of writing or speaking. The foreground is, in large part, the portions of a text or talk which do not conform to these expectations. Foregrounding is thus produced as a result of deviation from linguistic norms of various kinds.

Foregrounding can manifest in capitalization. Except for proper nouns, nouns do not have their initial letters capitalized. But if a writer does that to a noun that is not a proper noun, the writer has foregrounded that lexical item. It could also manifest in word order and in coinages. Soyinka’s *Ake* and *Ibadan* contain many examples of coinages and graphological foregrounding which include the use of capitalization.

Self-Assessment Exercise

How do you think the language of prose will be, different from that of poetry?

4.0 CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it is clear that language plays an important role in fiction. The thematic concern of the novelist is carried by language. Indeed, language and literature are so closely linked in this respect that without language, literature will not have any meaningful existence.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have examined the language of prose by first providing a general overview of the language of literature and by looking at a checklist for a linguistic analysis of prose e.g. “I” narrator, third person, linguistic indicators of view point, such as deixis,

'new' 'versus' 'given', and foregrounding. Your stylistic analysis of any prose fiction will be meaningful if you reflect all or many of these.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) What do you understand by point of view?
- (2) Define foregrounding, giving some examples.
- (3) What are the general features of the language of prose fiction?
- (4) Carry out a stylistic analysis of the language of any prose fiction of your choice.

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UNIT 2 THE LANGUAGE OF LITERATURE (II) **(The Language of Poetry)**

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 What is Poetry?
 - 3.2 Forms of poetry
 - 3.3 The Language of Poetry
 - 3.3.1 Poetry and Sound Patterns
 - 3.3.2 Some other Figures of Speech
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

It may be said that we inherited poetry from the universe. Creation was set in form and framed in poetry long before man became a part of it. Consequently, poetry is often regarded as a mystery and in some respect, it is one. In this unit, we shall look at poetry and the basis of its puzzling nature, its language and the elements that make it different from other genres of literature. This is a good follow-up to the first lecture you had on poetry in this course.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) explain what poetry is;
- (ii) identify some forms of poetry;
- (iii) describe the language of poetry; and
- (iv) carry out a stylistic analysis of the language of any poem of your choice.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 What is poetry?

Poetry is a form of literature that uses language in a special way. It is the expression of intense feelings in a very imaginative way. Poetry exists in the verse form. According to Ogungbesan and Woolger (1978), poetry is “a vital and meaningful form of expression by which the individual poet may convey his thoughts and feelings on experience” (p. 7). Our traditional African heritage is very rich in poetry.

3.2 Forms of Poetry

For our purpose here, we shall discuss four major poetic forms.

1. Lyric poem

A lyric poem is a relatively short, non-narrative poem in which a single speaker unfolds a state of mind or an emotional state. Lyric poetry retains some of the elements of song which is said to be its origin. For the Greek writers, the lyric was a song accompanied by the lyre (a plucked string instrument associated with ancient Greece). The lyric poem has various forms, namely, elegy, ode and sonnet.

Ode: This is a long lyric poem with serious theme written in an elevated style. Good examples are Wordsworth's *Hymn to Duty* and Keats' *Ode to a Grecian Urn*.

Elegy: In modern usage, elegy is a ceremonial lament for the death of a particular person (for example, Tennyson's *In Memoriam A.H.H.*). In another form, the term elegy is used for solemn meditations, often on questions of death, such as Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.

Sonnet: It is the most widespread and most formal of lyric poems. Originally, the sonnet was a love poem which dealt with the lover's sufferings and hopes. It originated in Italy and turned out to be popular in England in the Renaissance when Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey translated and imitated the sonnets written by Petrarch (Petrarchan Smith). After the seventeenth century, the sonnet was used for other topics than love; for instance, religious experience (by Donne and Milton), reflections on art (by Keats or Shelley), war experience (by Brooke and Owen). Sonnet is written in a single stanza of fourteen lines with an intricate pattern.

2. Narrative Poetry

Narrative poetry gives a verbal depiction, in verse, of a series of connected events and it drives characters through a plot. It is always conveyed by a narrator. Narrative poems might tell of a love story (like Tennyson's *Maud*), the account of a father and son (like Wordsworth's *Michael*) or the deeds of a hero or heroine (like Walter Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*). Narrative poetry has categories such as: epic and ballad.

Epic: Epic operates on a large scale, both in length and topic, such as the founding of a nation (Virgil's *Aeneid*) or the start of world history (Milton's *Paradise Lost*). It relies on the use of an elevated style of language, and supernatural beings take part in the action. Epic, is a long narrative poem, grand both in theme and style and it deals with famous or historical events of national or universal significance, involving actions of broad sweep and grandeur. Most epics operate on the exploits of a single individual, thereby giving unity to the composition.

Mock-epic: Mock-epic makes use of epic conventions, like the elevated style and the assumption that the topic is of great importance, to deal with completely insignificant

occurrences. Mock-epic is derived from the serious epic. It satirizes present-day ideas or situations in a form and style burlesquing the serious epic. A famous example is Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, which conveys the tale of a young beauty whose suitor secretly cuts off a lock of her hair.

Ballad: Is a song, initially transmitted orally, which tells a story. It is a vital form of folk poetry which was adapted for literary uses from the sixteenth century onwards. A ballad is a short narrative folk song that deals with the most dramatic part of a story, stirring to its conclusion by means of dialogue and a sequence of incidents. The word *ballad* was first used in a broad sense to mean a simple short poem. Such a poem could be narrative or lyric, sung or not sung, crude or polite, sentimental or satiric, religious or secular. It was vaguely associated with dance. In terms of structure, a ballad is often in a stanza, usually a four-line stanza.

3. Didactic Poetry

The purpose of a didactic poem is principally to teach some lesson. This can take the form of very precise instructions, such as how to catch a fish, as in James Thomson's *The Seasons* (*Spring* 379-442) or ways of writing good poetry as we have in Pope's *Essay on Criticism*. However, it can also be meant as informative in a general way. Until the twentieth century, all literature was expected to have a didactic purpose in a general sense, that is, to impart moral, theoretical or even practical knowledge. To this effect, Horace in particular demanded that poetry should combine learning and pleasure. For instance, Bryant's poetry was frequently didactic; he is best remembered for his beautiful descriptions of scenes in the Berkshire Hills of Massachusetts. For Bryant, nature was a symbol of the power of God and a moral influence on humanity.

3.3 The Language of Poetry

Poetry is simply the renewal of words. Whenever we pick up a poem to read, the impression we are given is that language is spiritual, as insubstantial as breath on a winter's day. For us to get closer to poetry, we need to fine-tune our sensitivity to language and to its histories, overtones, rhythms, meanings, and suggestions. Language makes a successful poem. If we endeavour to have a relationship with poetry, we will become more sensitive to language. We start getting the urge to identify instances of beauty, sensations to meanings in a single phrase, and in a well-turned line. Poetry will always give us the enablement to pay rapt attention both to poems and to life in general. In order to understand the language of poetry, we will do well to note what follows.

3.3.1 Poetry and Sound Patterns

A good poet thinks more than what a word means; he also considers how a word sounds. The sound of a well-chosen word can strengthen a mood or make an idea more forceful. The sounds of words can also create a musical quality in a piece of writing. In order to achieve special sound effects, poets make use of alliteration, assonance, rhyme and rhythm and onomatopoeia, among other things.

Alliteration: Poets call our attention to certain words in a line of poetry by using alliteration. Alliteration is the repetition of the same consonant at the beginning of words that are close together. It is used to create a pleasant, rhythmic effect. Let us see the exuberance of alliteration in the following line:

Give me the splendid silent sun with all his beams full-dazzling!
(Walt Whitman, *Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun*)

Can you identify the sound that is repeated here? What do you think is the effect?

Assonance: This refers to the repetition of vowel sounds to stress words or ideas. Assonance is used to add a musical quality to a poem. It helps in setting the mood of a poem. In general, long vowel sounds suggest either a free, joyful mood or an eerie mood. On the other hand, short vowels usually suggest a harsher, tighter, or more delicate mood. Let us pay attention to the long vowel in the following poem. What effect does this create in the poem?

He who, from zone of zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

William Cullen Bryant, *To a Waterfowl*.

Rhyme

Rhyme gives a musical quality to poetry. Rhyme occurs at the ends of lines in a poem. If two or more lines end in the same sound, we say they rhyme. Letters are used to describe the rhyme scheme of a poem. Each rhyming sound is assigned a different letter and lines that rhyme are given the same letter. For instance, let us examine the use of rhyme in the following poem:

The railroad track is miles away (a)
And the day is loud with voices speaking (b)
Yet there isn't a train goes by all day (a)
But I hear its whistle shrieking (b)

(Edna St. Vincent Millay, *Travel*)

In this poem, lines 1 and 3 rhyme, while lines 2 and 4 also rhyme.

Generally, the use of intonation and the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables, together with rhythm, helps to create sound effects in poetry. And rhythm can suggest meaning in poetry.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Study J.P. Clark's Poem "Night Rain" and explain how its rhythm suggests some meanings.

Onomatopoeia

Poets use this to add excitement to the sound of a poem. It is the imitation of natural sounds by words. Example:

You can hear her holler and whine cry.
Her voice is thin and her moan is high,
And her crackling laugh or her barking cold
Bring terror to the young and old

(Margaret Walker, *Molly Means*)

Can you explain the onomatopoeia in the poem?

3.3.2 Some other Figures of Speech

Metaphor

Aristotle declared that what a poet needs beyond everything else is a command of metaphor, the ability to see similarity in things dissimilar. Metaphor and its close relation, simile, are poetry's most constant properties; theirs is the power of illuminating and establishing a kinship between objects wholly unlike each other. Look at this:

I'm sorry that country is not in working order

I'm sorry that planet is out of service.

(Eve Merriam, *I'm sorry said the machine*)

Simile

A simile expresses a comparison between two unlike things with the use of "as" or "like." The things compared are shown to be similar in some respect but are usually different by their nature in general. Examples:

- (a) Sadiku's tongue is as sharp as a blade.
- (b) He is like a tiger.

Synecdoche

This is a figure of speech in which a part is used for a whole or vice versa e.g. Nigeria is meeting Ghana today in a friendly football match.

Personification

This is a form of comparison which attributes human characteristics to abstractions or things which are not human. When Milton says that "the floods clap their hands" and "confusion heard his voice," he is individualizing the floods as if they were people and endowing confusion with personal life. See another example:

A narrow wind complains all day

How someone treated him:

(Emily Dickinson, *The Sky Is Low, the Clouds Are Mean*)

Metonymy

This is a figure of speech in which an object is used to stand for its users e.g. The pen is mightier than the sword.

Irony

This is a literary device that is dryly humorous or lightly sarcastic within a speech, in which words are used to convey a meaning contrary to their literal sense. Irony is an expression of double meaning, and a statement in which the words suggest the opposite of their literal sense.

Hyperbole

This is an exaggeration employed to give force or intensity to a statement. It is a form of inordinate exaggeration according to which a person or thing is depicted as being better or worse, or larger or smaller, than is actually the case.

Look at this:

I think that I shall never see
A billboard lovely as a tree.
Indeed, unless the billboards fall
I'll never see a tree at all.

(Ogden Nash, *Song of the Open Road*)

4.0 CONCLUSION

Poetry is a form of literature, spoken or written, that emphasizes rhythm, other intricate patterns of sound and imagery, and the many possible ways that words can suggest meanings. Unlike other genres of literature, its language is often complex, sentimental, condensed and esoteric. To achieve this, the poet, for the inspirational composition of poetry, relies on the sound of the spoken language and on figurative language to convey meaning that transcends meaning.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have tried to explain the meaning, nature and forms of poetry as well as its language. As an expression of intense feelings, poetry relies heavily on connotative dimension of word meaning, figurative expressions, sound imagery and so on. The poet has the liberty to express his feelings the way he wants. This form of liberty (i.e. freedom) is called poetic licence.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) What is poetry? Give the titles of three poems that you have read?
- (2) Identify and explain at least three forms/types of poetry. Give appropriate examples.
- (3) What are the essential features of the language of poetry?
- (4) Carry out a stylistic analysis of the language of any poem of your choice.

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UNIT 3 THE LANGUAGE OF LITERATURE (III) **(The Language of Drama)**

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 What is Drama?
 - 3.2 The Nature of Drama
 - 3.3 The Language of Drama
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

One great advantage which drama has over other genres of literature is its communicative ability. This also makes it a good medium for instruction- a way of making concrete and immediate that which would have sounded vague. What enhances this communicative ability is dramatic language. In this unit, we shall explore the features of the language of drama. The unit is also a follow-up to what you learnt about drama earlier in this course.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) define drama;
- (ii) explain the nature of drama;
- (iii) describe the language of drama; and
- (iv) carry out a stylistic analysis of the language of any drama text of your choice.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 What is Drama?

Drama is a form of literature that tells a story through the words and actions of the characters. A drama, also called a play, usually is meant to be performed by actors and actresses in front of an audience. Brecht (1964:15) says that proper plays can only be understood when performed. Stanislavski asserts that it is only on stage that drama can be revealed in all its fullness and significance. To reveal its fullness and significance as a literary form, it is designed for the theatre with characters assigned roles which they act out in actions enacted on stage. Characters can be human beings, supernatural beings, animals or abstract qualities. The 'raw material' of drama is people interacting in a society and that society must be alive. Therefore, drama is an adaptation, a recreation and reflection of reality on stage enactment through the ability to create alternative modes of being to that of our existence in measurable flesh and blood (Brian Wilks).

Drama is essentially an art form which can be fully realized in the theatre. It is a creative experience in which audience and actors are engaged in a search which opens up new areas to them. Through watching a play and empathizing with actors, the audience is equipped to come to terms with the surrounding world. Consequently, drama is distinctive among the genres of literature, given its instantaneous impression on the audience. It is employed to inform, educate, entertain and, in some cases, mobilize the audience. Drama educates by helping the entire society to face its problems and burning issues, by suggesting alternatives, as a means of reflection on the human condition and by urging social cohesion.

3.2 The Nature of Drama

Drama is a form of literature written for performance — or, at least, written in a style that would allow for stage performance. As a text form, drama can be thought of as a story told through spoken remarks and stage directions. Of all literature forms, drama appears closest to virtual transcription of speech as well as the encounters and interaction of speech: lying, confronting, prevaricating, concealing, admitting, proclaiming and a wealth of their social/linguistic interactions. A few dramatists conceive characters as vehicles for their thoughts or values. Predominantly, dramatists convey ideas through their characters and the plot, instead of a direct embodiment of themselves in the way novelists do with narrators and poets do with personas.

By its actual nature and form, drama is performative; therefore, by reasoning process, it is realized extensively through performance. However, there are exceptions to this as certain playwrights consciously and productively put pen to paper to make plays principally meant to be read and enjoyed. For instance, Wole Soyinka writes for performance, but has the reading audience in mind. Nevertheless, drama is meant to be performed before an audience. Though it can be read as a play, the primary goal of drama is action. Until a play gets to the stage, it is yet to be accomplished; hence, performance is very important in drama. Besides the dramatic form that includes the character, action, actors and setting, putting on a play involves also set designers, costume designers and a director. The director controls the action. The set and costume designers create a visual representation of the setting. Drama is therefore, the most collaborative of all forms of literature.

The nature of drama is to serve a wide variety of functions at different times and in different places. The Roman writer, Horace, in one of the well-known statements about the purpose of literature in general and drama in particular, said it was designed ‘to delight and instruct’. Usually, the purpose of drama has been considered to be primarily the first of these, at times, the second, but generally at least, some degree of both has been present. Audiences attend plays from a mixture of motivations, including curiosity, pleasure-seeking, and a desire for knowledge or aesthetic experience. But all these experiences are intensified by the public nature of drama.

Language in drama reflects the seriousness or laughability of a dramatized story. The theme or subject matter of a particular play is determined by the language of such a play. The style of the language employed when such a play is a tragedy is different from when it is a comedy; indeed, plays are meant for different audiences. The choice of language is, therefore, determined by the audience for which a play is meant and the nature of the play itself- serious or otherwise. The language of drama is patterned on real-life conversations among people, and yet, when we watch a play, we have to consider the differences between real talk and drama talk. The language of drama is ultimately always constructed or 'made up' and it often serves several purposes. On the level of the story-world of a play, language can, of course, assume all the pragmatic functions that can be found in real-life conversations. For instance, to ensure mutual understanding and to convey information, to persuade or influence someone, to relate one's experience or signal emotions, etc. Among the devices used in drama for serious dramatic effects are dialogue, dramatic irony, pun, allegory, soliloquy etc.

- **Dialogue**

A play exists in dialogues. Therefore, one prominent feature of the language of drama is dialogue/conversation. When they are engaged in dialogues/conversations, characters use language that reveals their status, background, motivations, and so on.

- **Dramatic Irony**

Dramatic irony entails a situation where the reader (or audience) knows something about what's happening in the plot, about which the character(s) has/have no knowledge. Dramatic irony can be used in comedies and tragedies, and it works to engage the reader, as he is drawn into the event. The audience may sympathize with the character, who does not know the true situation. Or, the reader may see the character as blind or ignorant. The clues may be rather obvious, but the character may be unwilling to recognize the truth. Odewale, in *The gods are not to blame* is a good example of a dramatic irony, as the audience knows that he is the one guilty of the culprit he seeks to punish. Shakespeare's *Othello* offers another example of dramatic irony, as he blames Desdemona for cuckolding him (even as the audience knows that he is being deceived by Iago).

- **Allegory**

Allegory is an expression of a truth by means of a particular symbolic meaning. The symbolic meaning can be either a character taking on the role of a personal quality or trait, or it can be clues that lead to a deeper meaning. In allegory, abstract qualities are seen and personified into characters. An actual character becomes the quality discussed.

- **Pun**

The primary function of dramatic pun is to capture the conflicts and complex meanings of the characters' experiences through the individual words. Puns used in comical situations

are common in Shakespearean plays. The prominence of the puns demonstrates that words, like the human actions they describe, are subject to multiple interpretations. Shakespeare's plays exhibit many different kinds of puns, and characters employ them for multiple functions. *Romeo and Juliet* is one of the plays with puns. *Hamlet*, on the other hand has puns linked to vengeance and desperate state.

- **Soliloquy**

Soliloquy is a dramatic speech uttered by a character speaking aloud alone on the stage. The character thus reveals his/her inner thoughts and feelings to the audience. We see for example, instances of soliloquy in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*.

Self-Assessment Exercise

- i. What is drama?
- ii. "Drama is essentially an art form which can be fully realized in the theatre." Discuss.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Drama is a form of literature written for performance or at least written in a style that would allow for stage performance. Drama, as a genre of literature, is characterized by different movements that evolved with varying ideologies in a way to speak out the anxieties of different people. However, there are some devices that animate the language of drama. Above all, the language of drama is 'simple' and strikingly impressive with the playwright conscious of the fact that drama is written to be performed. The characters in a play may use prose or poetry form in their patterns of communication, depending on status, age, socio-cultural background, purpose, and so on.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have tried to explain the nature of drama as a genre of literature and the essential features of the language of drama. Simply put, since drama is expected to be performed on stage, the language of drama is the language of performance. The spoken language is the focus and this is reinforced by certain paralinguistic devices. Your knowledge of pragmatic stylistics will therefore be helpful in analysing a drama text.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) What is drama?
- (2) Explain carefully the nature of drama.
- (3) What are the essential features of the language of drama?
- (4) Carry out a stylistic analysis of the language of any drama text of your choice.

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UNIT 4 ELEMENTS OF REGISTER

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Meaning of Register
 - 3.2 Major Determinants of Register
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Language, by its nature, is not a monolithic entity; it varies along many dimensions. Such factors as topic, setting, participants, medium, etc condition variations in language. In this unit, you will be introduced to the important dimension of language studies which has some implications for stylistics – that is, register.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- (i) define register;
- (ii) identify the major determinants of register; and
- (iii) describe register elements in a text of your choice.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Meaning of Register

As a signalling system, language varies according to use and users. Language variety according to use has been given the technical term register while that according to users is referred to as dialect. According to Longe (1995: 41), the idea of register in language varieties differentiation can be traced back to Wegener with his argument for language differentiation into “field of context distinguished by general subject matter, participants’ interest, etc.” As Longe (1995) submits further, it is from Wegener’s and Malinowski’s ideas that Firth draws his concepts of context of situation, emphasizing appropriateness of language in situations.

Like most concepts in linguistics, register has been subjected to different interpretations. According to Leckie-Terry and Birch (1995: 6) the term was applied by Halliday to mean “a variety according to use in the sense that each speaker has a range of varieties and chooses between them at different times.” Halliday distinguishes that (i.e. register) from dialect which he describes as “a variety according to user, in the sense that each speaker uses one variety and uses it all the time” (Leckie-Terry and Birch 1995: 6). In their own

case, Gregory and Carroll (1978: 64) take register to be “a useful abstraction linking variations of language to variations of social context.” In addition, they see it as “a contextual category correlating groupings of linguistic features with recurrent situational features” (p. 4).

In a simple perspective, when we discuss the concept of register, the use to which language is put in a specific situation is defined. Each situation contains elements of meanings realizable through language. To buttress this point, Longe (1995: 38) cites Halliday and Hassan (1978) saying that:

The register is the set of meanings, the configuration of semantic patterns specified condition along with the words that are typically drawn upon under the realization of these meaning (p. 23).

Different dimensions of situational features are often referred to in the characterization of register, but the core ones are field, tenor and mode. The field of discourse deals with the significant social action, that is, the nature of the social activity engaged in, while the tenor relates to the dimension of role relationship. The mode of discourse is a matter of the symbolic organization of meanings into speech or writing. Field, tenor and mode dimensions of register characterization can be regarded as core ones in at least one sense – they correspond with Halliday’s tripartite function of language as shown thus:

Field	→	Ideational function
Tenor	→	Interpersonal function
Mode	→	Textual function

In the description of register, room is made for what is called a situational shift. There can be a shift in the field of discourse, which will trigger off a shift in the linguistic features just as shifts in tenor and mode can also occur with corresponding linguistic elements or features.

Registers therefore determine what we can mean as occasioned by what we are doing, with or to whom and through which channel. In other words, registers are different ways of saying different things and tend to differ in semantics and hence in lexicogrammar and, sometimes in phonology as a realization of this. The human society in which we live is complex and calls for diverse or different occupations or professions and each of these professions deploys language in its own peculiar way. The manner in which each profession uses language is its register and that is why register is regarded as an occupational variety of languages. The variables, which are taken into consideration in the description of registers, have earlier on been summarized into field, mode and tenor. These variables determine the range within which meanings are selected and the forms, which are used for their expressions. In other words, they determine the concept of register. The notion of register simply refers to the fact that the language we use varies

according to the situation of use; that is, what we are doing, the participants and the medium.

The illustration below shows the registers of some fields of human activities:

Field	Words/Expressions
Banking	Statement of account, foreign exchange, to over-draw an account, savings department , teller, standing order, loan, bank draft, bad debt, re-conciliatory account, bulk room, cheque e.t.c.
Wedding	Bride, bridegroom, bestman, chief brides, maid, pages, wedding ring, ring bearing, cutting the wedding cake, marriage register, officiating minister, reception, for better for worse, till death do us part etc.
Burial	Corpse, remains, undertakers, wake keeping, funeral oration, last rites, obituary, cemetery, earth to earth, dust to dust etc.
Football	Central referee, assistant referee, foul charge, eighteen yard box, penalty kick, free kick, left winger, midfielder, attacking midfielder, defending midfielder, goalless draw, score draw, half time etc.
Law	Counsel, plaintiff, alibi, injunction, jurisdiction, civil case, criminal case, for want of evidence, court summons, onus of proof, discharge and acquitted, contempt of court, bilabial offence, surety, perjury, locus stand etc.

Language is a maker of identify and when we speak or write, we show the type of persons we are, what we do or are doing and the type of social relationship we have with our interlocutors. This therefore is the kernel of the concept of register in language description.

Let us consider, for example, some registers and their peculiar linguistic features:

(1) **The Register of Bureaucracy**

- Passive sentences to avoid personal responsibility e.g. “I am directed...”
- Peculiar words and expressions such as *transfer of service, termination of appointment, emolument, work force, minutes, memos, agenda, directives*, etc.
- Peculiar abbreviations like B/F, K.I.V., PA, DPM, D.F, etc.

(2) **Legal Register**

- Use of archaic words and expressions e.g. *witnesseth, aforesaid, wheretofore, holden*, etc.
- Absence of punctuations.
- Peculiar words and expressions such as *plaintiff, respondent, accused, prosecutor, perjury, want of evidence, prove beyond reasonable doubt*, etc.

(3) **The Register of Science**

The language of orthodox medicine, which subsumes that of nursing, shares many features with the register of science and these include:

- Use of exact and precise words/ expression.
- Specialised/technical terms.
- Passive constructions to imbue the register with impersonal or scientific objectivity.

Read the following extract which illustrates the register of medicine:

“Penicillin is effective against a number of common organisms including streptococci, staphylococci, pneumococci and gonococci. It is free from toxic side effects and can be given in very large doses, but some people develop a sensitivity which is manifested by allergic reactions, such as urticaria and even anaphylactic shock. For this reason, patients should be asked if they have had previous penicillin treatment, and if thought necessary they should be given a small test dose” (Adapted from Thomas, D and Thomas, J. (1969) *English for Nurses* London: Edward Arnold. P. 82).

Self-Assessment Exercise

Read the extract above again and carry out its stylistic analysis, paying attention to its register.

3.2 Major Determinants of Register

The three major determinants of register are field, tenor and mode.

Field

The field of discourse refers to what is happening i.e. the nature of the social interaction taking place: what is it that the participants are engaged in, in which language figures as an essential component? The nature of the activities in which people are engaged will reflect in the language they use. The language of medicine, for example, will differ from that of farming.

Tenor

The tenor of discourse is also known as the style of discourse. This accounts for the formality or informality of the linguistic medium. It further identifies who is taking part in the discourse, the status and the roles of the participants etc in the discourse. The roles of the participants are what determine the hierarchic and the non-hierarchic roles or the dominated and the non-dominated. Language will reflect such interactions as between husband/wife, master/servant, doctor/patient, etc.

Mode

The Mode is the symbolic organization of the text, e.g. the rhetorical modes (persuasive, expository, didactic, etc.). It emphasizes the channel of communication, such as

spoken/written, monologic dialogic, visual contact, computer-mediated communication/telephone conversation and other modes by which communication or thoughts can be expressed etc. In its grammar and organization, for example, speech is different from writing. Speech lacks clear sentence boundaries and is replete with what we call monitoring features and gap fillers such as “you see,” “you know,” “I mean,” etc.

4.0 CONCLUSION

To understand various discourse types, the elements of registers are very important because they express the meanings required in a particular context. By understanding the language properties of a situation (i.e., the values for field, tenor, and mode), language users can predict the meanings that are likely to be exchanged and the language to be used.

5.0 SUMMARY

The practice of stylistics will expose you to different varieties of English, and of course, any other language of your choice. The register of each variety will clearly show in the vocabulary and to some extent in phonology and lexico-grammar. Certainly, language is variable and that variation in language that is conditioned by the factor of use is what we term register.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

(1) **Read the following text and undertake an analysis of its register**

“My lord, the evidence before the course shows that the plaintiffs have confessed having conducted themselves in a manner likely to cause a breach of peace and so there is no substance in the claim that they have been wrongly accused. I sincerely opine that there application for an interlocutory injunction is baseless. It definitely is not ultra-vires that College Authority to have taken disciplinary measures against the rioting students. I therefore pray the course to strike out the request for an interlocutory injunctions.”

(2) Define the concept of register.

(3) Identify and explain the major determinants of register.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 5 POINTS OF VIEW

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
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 - 3.1 What does Point of View Entail?
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Point of view occupies a prominent place in narration. Therefore, choosing your point of view in literature is one of the most vital things you will have to do as you sketch your story. To do it well, one must be aware of the details of viewpoint and reflect on how the viewpoint will impact the story. Thus, in this unit, we shall explore further what point of view means and the different points of view we may encounter in literature.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) define point of view;
- (ii) identify different points of view;
- (iii) describe the point of view in any text of your choice.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 What Does Point of View Entail?

In fictional writings, the person who tells or narrates a story and how it is told are critical issues for an author to decide. The tone and the meaning or sense of a story are usually affected or determined by who is telling the story and from what perspective. **We should recall that someone is always between the reader and the action of the story. That someone between the reader and the action tells the story from his or her own viewpoint.**

This angle of vision, that is, the view *from* which the people, events, and details of a story are viewed, is what is known as a point of view, or narrative point of view. Whichever point of view is chosen by the author, the principal thing he or she does is to narrate a story. The difference is the stance or perspective from which he chooses to narrate his story.

Point of view is a narrative device which literally means the position at which one looks at anything. It is the way the novelist sees characters and, how he reveals them in his inner mind, which may differ from that of the reader. Thus, (narrative) point of view determines through whose perspective the story is told.

Point of view enhances our ability to identify the narrator of a literary piece. The three major types of point of view in novels are first-person (observations of a character who narrates the story), third-person-limited (outside narration, focusing on one character's observations) and omniscient, (all-knowing narrator outside the story itself). Others are: second person, objective, limited Omniscient and alternating person points of view.

3.2 First Person Narration

First person narration or point of view, *also* known as the autobiographical narration, describes a situation where the protagonist speaks through the author who adopts the pronouns, 'I' and 'We.' With the first-person point of view, one of the novel's characters narrates the story. For example; a sentence in a novel in the first person might read, "As I stopped to stare into the river, I heard a strange sound behind me." The narrator of the story is the person who has experienced or witnessed the events he narrates, or in some literary pieces, the author may assume this position. From time to time, the first-person narrative is used as a way to directly convey the deeply internal, otherwise unspoken thoughts of the narrator. Frequently, the narrator's story revolves around himself or herself as the protagonist and allows this protagonist character's inner thoughts to be conveyed openly to the audience, even though they may not be opened or revealed to the other characters. It also allows that character to be further developed through his/her style in telling the story.

In some cases, the first person narration may be told as a story within a *story*, with the narrator appearing as a character in the story. The first person provides total subjectivity and all the immediacy, intimacy, and urgency of a single individual's conflicts. The first person also reveals a character's awareness at narrating a story. *David Copperfield* (1849-1850) by the English novelist, Charles Dickens, is narrated by the title character and opens "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show. Other examples of prose fiction in the first person point of view are *Gulliver's Travels*, *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte, etc. A rare form of first person narration is the first person omniscient in which the narrator is a character in the story, but also knows the thoughts and feelings of all the other characters. Typical of this is *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak.

3.3 Third Person Narration

This mode of narration occurs when the writer does not connect himself with the other characters in the novel. In this category of narration, the narrator does not take part in the action of the story as one of the characters, but let the audience know exactly how the

characters feel. We gain the knowledge of the characters through this outside voice. In this frame of narration, the author is provided with the greatest flexibility and, as a result, it turns out to be the most commonly used narrative mode in literature. In the third person narrative mode, each character is referred to by the narrator as 'he', 'she', 'it' or 'they'. For example, a sentence from a story in the third person limited might read, "As they stopped to stare into the river, they heard a strange sound behind them." In the third person narrative, it is essential that the narrator be merely an unspecified individual that conveys the story, but not a character of any kind contained in the story being told. The third person singular (he/she) is awesomely the most common type of third person narrative voice. An example of the third person narration can be seen in the works of the American writer, Henry James, who employs the third-person-limited point of view to a great effect in books such as *Daisy Miller* (1879) and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), with the central character acting as a person who can evaluate the significance of events and in turn transmit that evaluation to the reader.

3.4 Omniscient Narration

In a novel written from the point of view of an omniscient narrator, the reader knows what each character does and thinks. The reader maintains this knowledge as the plot moves from place to place or era to era. An omniscient narrator can also provide the reader with a direct assessment of actions, characters, and environment. An omniscient narrator plays no part in a story but is aware of all facts, including the character's thoughts. It sometimes even takes a subjective approach. One advantage of the omniscient narrator is that it enhances the sense of objective reliability of the plot. The omniscient mode of narration is the least capable of being unreliable – although the omniscient narrator can have his own personal judgements and opinions on the behaviour of the characters. In addition to reinforcing the sense of the narrator as reliable, the main advantage of this mode is that it is eminently suited to narrating huge, sweeping, epic stories or complicated stories involving numerous characters.

The omniscient point of view has advantages and disadvantages. Using an omniscient narrator allows a writer to be particularly clear as regards plot developments. This point of view also exposes the reader to the actions and thoughts of many characters and deepens the reader's understanding of the various aspects of the story. However, using an omniscient narrator can make a novel seem too authoritarian and artificial, because in their own lives, people do not have this all-knowing power. If clumsily executed, providing thick details may cause the reader to lose sight of the central plot within a mass of scenes, settings, and characters.

3.5 Objective Narration

The objective point of view enables the author to tell what happens in a narration without stating more than can be inferred from the story's action and dialogue. The narrator never discloses anything about what the characters think or feel. He remains an isolated observer.

3.6 Second Person Narration

This mode of narration is uncommon in literature. However, it is common in song lyrics. It is grammatically represented by the second person pronoun 'you', therefore making the audience feel as if he or she were a character within the story. The second person narrator can be a difficult style to manage. However, whenever it is used, the narration allows the reader to imagine himself or herself within the action of the novel. The second-person narrative mode is often paired with the first-person narrative mode in which the narrator makes emotional comparisons between the thoughts, actions, and feelings of 'you' versus 'I'. An instance of second-person narration could be found in Jay McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big City*. In this novel, the second-person point of view is intended to create an intense sense of intimacy between the narrator and the reader, causing the reader to feel powerless against a plot that leads him, blindly, through his own destruction and redemption. Although, Second-person narration can be a difficult style to manage, when handled properly, it allows the reader to imagine himself or herself within the action of the novel. It is capable of putting across strong accusatory tone, which can be achieved if the narrator condemns or expresses strong feelings about the actions of the focal character 'you.' It can also be effectively used to place the reader in an unknown, troubling or exhilarating situation. For instance, Iain Bank, in his novel, *Complicity*, employs the second person in the chapters dealing with the actions of a murderer. The second-person narrative, although rare, can, if mastered, make a whole lot of aesthetic composition.

3.7 Alternating Person Narration

The general norm for novels is the adoption of a single approach to point of view throughout. However, there are exceptions. Nowadays, many stories, alternate between the first and third person modes of narration. In typical cases, the author moves back and forth between a more omniscient narrator to a more personal first person narrator.

3.8 The Relevance of Points of View in Literature

(a) Point of View Imbues Orderliness in a Story

No story can be told without a point of view. The narration of a story by an author unravels the thoughts and mind of an author, the points of view he chooses to take in order to bear out his thoughts or mind (concerning the characters he creates) are only different ways of exposing or talking about his characters and the world he creates. Therefore, points of view create access to the thoughts, mind and views of an author. They are the different ways he presents his characters and what he thinks about them. Some of these different points of view give a direct access or create a direct contact between the characters and their environment, making the reader live in the world of the characters, while some other points of view detach the reader to an extent, because the teller of the story is somewhat standing aloof; that is, he is an observer. The point of view taken by an author is determined by the author, and how he chooses to tell his story. While some authors make use of just one point of view throughout the whole story,

recent writings, as said earlier show a combination of more than one. Whichever style or viewpoint the writer has chosen, point view helps in organizing a story.

(b) Point of View Recreates how an Individual Experiences the World

Apart from the above, point of view in a story, especially the omniscient and the first person point of views, helps the readers to know what each character thinks. The omniscient point of view especially, provides the reader with a direct assessment of action, character and environment. Points of view may guide or provide the reader with what to think about a character, a people or a place. They give the reader the freedom to form his or her own view of a character, people or a place. Again, the particular point of view chosen by an author can give authenticity and life to his characters.

Self-Assessment Exercise

What do you understand by point of view?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Points of view in literature, undoubtedly, expose issues behind the narration of literary texts. With a point of view, the story is constructed and with it the story is interpreted. Authors or writers give coherence to their works through the right point of view as they reveal character's way of thinking as shaped by his or her experience, mindset, and history.

5.0 SUMMARY

In order to carry out a stylistic analysis of any form of literature, especially prose fiction, we should be familiar with the point of view which the author has adopted. Remember that point of view is one of the important elements of prose fiction – it defines the angle from which a particular story is narrated. While it is common to encounter a particular point of view throughout in a story, we may also witness multiple points of view in some other stories as it is the case, for example, in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat*.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) What is point of view?
- (2) Mention and explain at least three different points of view.
- (3) Describe the point of view used in any prose fiction of your choice.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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MODULE 5 SAMPLE TEXTUAL ANALYSES

UNIT 1 A SAMPLE STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF A PROSE PASSAGE

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

From the preceding units, we have been discussing stylistics and the various approaches to its analysis. In this unit, we shall embark on a stylistic analysis of a prose passage with a view to further familiarising you with the practice of stylistics.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) identify the levels of language description relevant to a stylistic analysis;
- (ii) Undertake a stylistic analysis of any prose passage of your choice.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

Since this is a practical section, you should read the following question and the answer following it. This will serve as a guide to you in your future endeavour to analyse passages stylistically.

Question: Carry out a stylistic analysis of the passage below:

Wherever 1

went in my campaigning, Boniface sat with me in front and the other three at the back of the car. As our journeys became more and more hazardous I agreed to our carrying the minimum of weapons strictly for defence. We had live matchets, a few empty bottles and stones in the boot. Later we were compelled to add two doubled-barrel led guns. I only agreed to this most reluctantly after many acts of violence were staged against us, like the unprovoked attack by some hoodlums and thugs calling themselves Nanga's Youth Vanguard or Nangavanga, for short. New branches of this Nangavanga were springing up every day throughout the district. Their declared aim was 'to annihilate all enemies of progress' and 'to project true Nangaism.' The fellows we ran into carried placards, one

of which read: NANGAISM FOREVER: SAMALU IS TREITOR. It was the first time I had seen my self on a placard and I felt oddly elated. It was also amusing, really, how the cowards slunk away from road -blocks they had put up when Boniface reached out and grabbed two of their leaders, brought their heads together like dumb-bells and left them to fall to either side of him. You should have seen them fall like cut banana trunks, it was then I acquired my first trophy- the placard with my name on it. But I lost my windscreen which they smashed with stones. It was funny but from then on I began to look out for unfriendly placards carrying my name and to feel somewhat disappointed if I didn't see them or saw too few.

Achebe, C. (1966:112. 113) *A man of the people* Ibadan: Heinemann.

Analysis

The passage is a prose depicting a state of anarchy during a political transition. The plot presents the ordeal the narrator and his four supporters passed through in their political campaigns. Thus, we have a simple plot which cadence, lexical choice and thematic concern resonate (and revolve round) politics and violence. With this background in view, we may deduce why the language of the prose is harsh and the situation ominous. The passage makes use of the first person narrative technique.

At the graphological level, the passage contains 269 words and 27 lines. The use of odd numbers in this context is a pointer to the chaotic, odd situation presented in the text, as it is a common knowledge that political transitions in Africa are always marred by arson, thuggery and violence. The passage further contains one paragraph of fourteen lengthy sentences. This underscores the hypocrisy of African politicians who speak lengthy words to deceive the masses. After assuming office, they perform less than expected.

The prose is replete with eight commas, six hyphens (with five hyphenated words), two colons, two quotes and fourteen periods. All these are prominently used because both the paragraph and the sentences are long. The semicolons indicate the points where new ideas (slogans) are presented.

At the phonological level, there is the preponderance of the sound /i/ as in line two of the prose. Sound /n/ also features prominently in the prose as in words like "New, Nanga, Nangavanga. Nangrism. Funny, ran". All these words and their associates litter the whole passage such that they give it some rhythm.

The graphic arrangement of the prose is significant, The words: "Wherever" and "I" start it and two words "too" and "few" end it such that the first line is indented to the left and the last line to the right. Stylistically, it confirms the text as an excerpt extracted from a

portion of a text. It also affirms that the political situation presented in question is a dichotomy between two camps and the conflict is unresolved in the context.

At the lexico-semantic level, there is an attempt (by the writer) to reveal that the passage has to do with politics and political activities as shown in the choice of such words as:

Campaigning (line 2)
Journey (acts of violence) (line 8)
Vanguard (line 10)
Project (line 13)
Placard (lines 14, 16)

Furthermore, the political problems are carefully presented in words and expressions like:

Campaigning - journeys became more and more hazardous (line 4)
Weapons for defence (line 5)
Five matchets
Empty bottles
Stones
Two doubled- barreled guns
Nangavanga (a parody of vagabonds)
Enemies of progress
Traitor (traitor) Bottles

The use of such words and expressions above presents the whole scenario as being chaotic and in a state of anomie. There is a kind of collocation in:

campaigning and hazardous journey
weapons and defence
violence and nangavanga (parody of vagabonds)
enemy and traitor (traitor)
violence and annihilation.

Initially, the writer underplays his role in the violence *by* using the word “campaigning” for his own acts and “violence” for those of his opponents. Conversely, the opponents in turn use the phrase “enemies of progress” to refer to the narrator. To further justify his actions (roles), the writer refers to his campaign as a hazardous journey which requires “weapons for defence” (but not weapons for attack). Thus he uses the word “weapons” to present the instruments which include “matchets, empty bottles, stones and double-barrelled guns.”

Apart from collocation, another stylistic device used by the author is foregrounding. This is prominent in the placard’s inscription carried by the narrator’s opponent which reads:

NANGAISM FOREVER: SAMALU IS TREITOR.

The statement contains a phrase and a clause. First, it presents the two political gladiators i.e. Nanga and Samalu. It also presents the subject matter, “nangaism”. *Ism* in the context represents the political hegemony which the bearers want to perpetuate forever. The clause (Samalu is traitor) presupposes that Samalu was once with the former group of Nanga before he decamped and decided to challenge his mentor. It also repeats the narrator’s identity as Samalu. The spelling of traitor as ‘treitor’ in the text is a foregrounding technique that the author employs to present the bearers (writers of the inscription) and referent as half-baked or not that literate.

At the syntactic level, the passage contains few simple sentences and a great deal of compound complex sentences such as:

“Wherever I went in my campaigning, Boniface sat with me in front and the other three at the back.”

(Compound-complex).

“Later we were compelled to add two double-barrelled guns.”

(Simple)

“It was funny but from then on I began to look out for unfriendly placards Carrying my name and to feel somewhat disappointed if I didn’t see them or saw too few.”

(Compound-complex).

At the level of discourse, certain cohesive ties are used to hold the text together lexically. These include:

reference: as in

It was then I acquired my first trophy- the placard with my name on it (sentence 12).

This is a case of cataphoric reference; i.e. forward reference “trophy” cataphorically refers to “the placard.”

There are also instances of anaphoric reference as in:

Boniface...grabbed two of their leaders... You should have seen them fall like cut banana truck (sentences 10 and 11)

“them” is an anaphoric (backward) reference to the “two of their leaders.”

Ellipsis

This is a case of recoverable omissions, and substitution by zero. Examples:

Boniface reached out and [Boniface] grabbed two of their leaders (line 19, sentence 10).

Boniface sat with me in front and the other three [sat] at the back of the car (sentence 2).

Conjunction

This is preponderant in the whole text. Examples include:

‘and’ – lines 2, 3, 9, 13 and 17.

‘but’ – line 23.

‘if’ – line 26.

‘when’ – line 19.

The conjunctions are used to hold the text together: “and,” “but” are used to balance ideas while “if,” “when” indicate dependency relationship. In other words, the conjunction identified in the text perform cohesive functions.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It should be noted that the analysis above is just a sample. Therefore, it should not be crammed. Rather, you are expected to try your hands on several prose passages, following the pattern that is presented to you here. Of course, you should also demonstrate some level of creativity in your stylistic analysis.

5.0 SUMMARY

In summary, we may deduce that the author has presented the political imbroglio between two warring factions replicated in the text through different linguistic stylistic tools. Through the tone of the passage, it is clear that the speaker wants the audience to approve of his own actions and condemn those of his opponents.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Carry out a stylistic analysis of the passage below:

[Peter Walsh, a middle-aged man who has just returned to London after years in India, watches a summer evening begin in the London streets. The time is just after the First World War.]

Since it was a very hot night and the paper boys went by with placards proclaiming in huge red letters that there was a heat-wave, wicker chairs were placed on the hotel steps and there, sipping, smoking, detached

gentlemen sat. peter Walsh sat there. One might fancy that day, the London day, was just beginning. Like a woman who had slipped off her print dress and white apron to array herself in blue and pearls, the day changed, put off stuff, took guaze, changed to evening, and with the same sigh of exhilaration that a woman breathes, tumbling petticoats on the floor, it too shed dust, heat, colour; the traffic thinned; motor cars, tinkling, darting, succeeded the lumber of vans; and here and there among the thick foliage of the squares an intense light hung. I resign, the evening seemed to say, as it paled and faded above the battlements and prominences, moulded, pointed, of hotel, flat, and block of shops, I fade, she was beginning, I disappear, but London would have none of it, and rushed her bayonets into the sky, pinioned her, constrained her partnership in her revelry.

... The prolonged evening was. Inspiring... For as the young people went by with their dispatch-boxes, awfully glad to be free, proud too, dumbly, of stepping this famous pavement, joy of a kind, cheap, tinselly, if you like, but all the same rapture, flushed their faces. They dressed well too; pink stockings; pretty shoes. They would now have two hours at the pictures. It sharpened them, it refined them, the yellow-blue evening light; and on the leaves in the square shone lurid, livid – they looked as if dipped in sea water- the foliage of a submerged city.

Virginia Wolf (1882 – 1941)
From 'Mrs Dalloway' (adapted)

7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READING

Achebe, C. (1966). *A Man of the People*. Ibadan: Heinemann.

UNIT 2 A SAMPLE STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF A DRAMA PASSAGE

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is devoted to an analysis of a sample drama piece. You will need to read the passage carefully, paying particular attention to the stylistic elements deployed in it and also noting the contrast in the dramatic genre and the prose genre analysed in the previous unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) list the stylistic features in a given dramatic passage;
- (ii) carry out a stylistic analysis of a drama text.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

The task before you is to read the following drama passage and its analysis, paying particular attention to its stylistic features highlighted.

Question: Carry out a stylistic analysis of the following drama passage:

Pilkings: Joseph, are you a Christian or not?

Joseph: Yessir

Pilkings: Now Joseph, answer me on the honour of a Christian - What *is* supposed to be going on in town tonight?

Joseph: Tonight sir? You mean that chief who is going to killing himself

Pilkings: You do mean he is going to kill somebody don't you?

Joseph No master. He will not kill anybody and no one will kill him. He will simply die

Jane: But why Joseph?

Joseph: It is native law and custom. The king die last month. Tonight is his burial. But before they can bury him, the Elesin must die so as to accompany him to heaven.

[Soyinka, W. (1975), *Death and the King's Horseman*. Ibadan: Spectrum. pp 26-27].

Analysis

The text presents three people probably at home, having a casual but not entirely friendly conversation. Two men are presented against a lady in terms of characterization. This involves gender imbalance. The plus higher role is evident through the use of the first name by Pilkings and Jane for Joseph. The minus higher role in language manifests in Joseph's answers to Pilkings and Jane. Joseph mostly adds the honorific 'sir' to his answers while replying the Pilkingses. i.e. Pilkings and Jane who are husband and wife. The casualness of the conversation is also evident through the use of incomplete and ellipted sentences. At the same time, the language can be said to be official through the use of question/ answer technique as well as words like "sir, honour, master", etc.

Since the passage is a dramatic one, it is expedient to begin our analysis at the level of discourse. It should be noted that the passage presents three speakers; one lady and two men. On the whole, we have a transaction that simultaneously contains an exchange, eight moves and fourteen acts. The first statement is a grammatical act of sentence while the second statement is an act (word) as in:

Joseph, are you a Christian or not? (Act –sentence) – Turn 1
Yessir (Act-word) – Turn 2

The text graphologically, contains eight turns. The conversation starts with adjacency pairs of questioning/ answering technique and it also ends the same way. There is, therefore, a preponderance of the adjacency pairs in the text. In terms of function, the dominant discourse act is the elicitation act. Out of the eight turns, five are designed to ask questions. This is evident through the use of question marks in turns 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6. Meanwhile, the remaining three turns provide answers to the questions; hence, they are functioning as informative acts.

The major cohesive ties inherent in the play- text – are ellipsis, conjunction, lexical cohesion and reference. These are expatiated below:

Ellipsis

Turn 2: Joseph: Yessir [{yes} I am]

Turn 8. "It is native law and [it is] custom."

Turn 2 is a response to the question ‘are you a Christian or not P.’ As such, the answer is affirming that he is. Turn 8 shows the elision of “it is”. The above are cases of clausal ellipsis [“I am” and “it is”. Each of them contains pronominal subject and a be-verb.

Turn 6: “No [I don’t] master”. This is another case of clausal ellipsis.

Conjunction

Another prominent cohesive tie is conjunction. The passage is largely replete with coordinating conjunctions and a subordinating conjunction as in:

Turn 4 – who... [Subordinating conjunction]

Turn 6 – and... [Coordinating conjunction]

Turn 7 – but... [Coordinating conjunction]

Turn 8 – and... [Coordinating conjunction]

Lexical Cohesion

Another cohesive tie in the text is lexical cohesion. For instance,

You do mean he is going to kill- *somebody* – Turn 5

He will not kill- *anybody* – Turn 6

No one – will kill him- Turn 6

Reference

Reference is another tie deployed by the playwright. This manifests in:

“Joseph, are *you* a Christian or not”- Turn 1

“You” is an anaphoric reference to Joseph.

“The king die last month. Tonight is *his* burial”, - Turn 8;

“his” is another anaphoric reference to ‘the king’.

At the lexico-semantic level, the use of words and expressions like “Christian”, “native law” and “custom” is significant. The words present the conflict in the play i.e. modern Christianity versus native traditional belief. On the other hand, we have two white personalities trying to cajole a black servant into telling them the fellow black man’s secret. Finally, the words are thematically pointing to colonization and its negative effect on the traditional beliefs. The theme of destruction or death can be deduced from the preponderance of the following words in the discourse:

Kill - Turns 4, 5. 6 (2 times)

Die - Turns 6 and 8 (2 times)

Bury -Turn 8

Burial -Turn 8

At the syntactic level, the conversation is presented mostly in simple and compound sentences. For instance:

Are you a Christian or not? – Turn 1 - Simple sentence

Yessir [I am] – Turn 2 - Simple sentence

Answer me on the honour of a Christian – Turn 3 - Simple sentence.

He will not kill anybody and no one will kill him – Turn 8 - Compound sentence.

The above sentence typology is used as a major feature of the drama text. It is also employed so as to bring about mutual intelligibility among the interlocutors who are not from the same social and ethnic backgrounds. Any complexity of statement or idea might be unintelligible to either of the party.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The above analysis serves as *a* model and should not be memorized. The approach adopted can be improved upon as you come across different dramatic texts. What is important is that whatever observation you make must have its basis in the text. You should avoid a deliberate misinterpretation of any text you analyse.

5.0 SUMMARY

In summary, we may conclude that the playwright has presented his idea with simplicity of language and discursive elements that reduce heuristic tasks on the part of the reader to comprehend. Thus, the simplicity of language has a thematic motivation, as well as relevance, especially for characterization. Note that Joseph is a 'lesser' character when compared with the Pilkins (husband and wife).

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Carry out a stylistic analysis of the drama passage below:

When the curtain rises, the set is in darkness but for a single spot upon the COMMON MAN who sits on a big property basket.

COMMON MAN (Rises) It is perverse! To start a play made up of Kings and Cardinals in speaking costumes, and intellectuals with embroidered mouths, with me.

If a King or a Cardinal had done the prologue he'd have had the right materials. And an intellectual would have shown enough majestic

meanings, colored propositions, and closely woven liturgical stuff to dress the House of Lords! But this!

Is this a costume? Does this say anything? It barely covers one man's nakedness! A bit of black material to reduce Old Adam to the Common Man.

Oh, if they'd let me come on naked, I could have shown you something of my own. Which would have told you without words—! Something I've forgotten . . . Old Adam's muffled up. (*Backing* towards the basket) Well for a proposition of my own, I need a costume. (Takes out and puts on the coat *and* hat of STEWARD) Matthew! The Household Steward of Sir Thomas More! (*Lights come up swiftly on set. He takes* from the basket five silver *gob-lets*, one forger than the others, *and a jug with a lid, with which* he furnishes *the table-* A burst of conventional merriment off; he pauses and *indicates head* of stairs) There's company to dinner. (He pours a cup of wine) all right! A Common Man! A Sixteenth-Century Butler! (He *drinks* from the *cup*) All right—the Six—(He *breaks off, agreeably* surprised by the quality of the liquor, regards the jug respectfully and *drinks* again from jug) The Sixteenth Century is the Century of the Common Man. (He *puts down the jug*) Like all the other centuries. And that's my proposition.

(During the last part of the speech, voices *ate* heard off. Now, enter, *at the head* of the stairs, SIR THOMAS MORE).

STEWARD: That's Sir Thomas More.

MORE: The wine please, Matthew?

STEWARD: It's there, Sir Thomas.

MORE: (Looking into the jug) Is it good?

STEWARD: Bless you, sir! I don't know.

(From Robert Bolt's *A Man For All Seasons*)

In carrying out the analysis, pay attention to the message/subject-matter and phonological, syntactic and lexico-semantic devices employed in the text.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Soyinka, W. (1975). *Death and the King's Horseman*. Ibadan: Spectrum. pp. 26 – 27

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UNIT 3 A SAMPLE STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF A POEM

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
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- 4.0 Conclusion
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The language of poetry, you will remember, is usually characterized by some stylistic features which can be analysed at graphological, phonological, syntactic and lexico-semantic. It is all these features that give a literary work, like a poem, what Fowler (1975: 11) calls “identity.”

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- (i) describe the procedures to follow in doing a stylistic analysis of a poem;
- (ii) carry out a stylistic analysis of any poem of your choice.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

Read the poem below carefully:

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see my broken
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you
Don't you take it awful hard.
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Digging' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise?
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear.
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the drum and the hope of the slave
I rise
I rise
I rise

(Maya Angelou (1978) "Still I Rise")

3.1. Graphological Features

The poem is divided into eight stanzas. Each of the first to seventh stanzas contains four lines. The eighth stanza, however, comprises fifteen lines. There is predominant use of the question mark in the poem as this could be seen in lines 5, 6, 13, 14, 17, 25 and 28. This is, perhaps, not unconnected with the background of the poem, which has to do with the Black American slaves' constant but purposive quest for identity and freedom from

the white masters' oppression and tyranny Both comma and full stop are also used, almost in equal proportions, in the poem. There is the use of apostrophe in the poem; e.g:

I'll (lines 4, 12 and 24)
'Cause (lines 7 and 19)
Don't (line 18)
I've (lines 7, 19 and 27)
That's (line 31)
I'm (line, 33)

Apostrophe is a graphological tool employed to "indicate the colloquial nature of the language used in the poem. This, probably, shows the carefree attitude of the poetic persona to her uncaring audience. The poem is emblematic as its form represents its title. The successive repetition of "I rise" in three Lines in the final stanza of the poem cuts the image of a rising phalanx. Thus, the form of the poem is quite reflective of a group of people rising against the tide of oppression and tyranny

3.2 Phonological Features

There are some phonological features in the poem which facilitate a degree of musicality in it. Rhyme, as a prosodic element in a poem, is utilized in a good measure in the poem. This is noticeable in lines 2 and 4, 6 and 8, 10 and 12, 14 and 16, 18 and 20, 22 and 24, 26 and 28, 33 and 34, 35 and 37, and 39 and 40. The musicality which the use of rhyme evokes in the poem appears to have made it attract attention to the disdainful message which the poetic persona is trying to get across to her audience.

The use of repetition in "I rise", which, though, begins the poem as "I'll rise" is another noticeable phonological feature which assists in placing emphasis on the resolution of the defiant poetic persona not to allow anything deter her from achieving freedom.

3.3 Syntactic Features

The sentence types that are commonly used in the poem are the imperative and the interrogative. The use of these sentence types harmonizes with the tone and the mood of the poetic persona. While the pseudo imperative sentences such as the following:

You may write me down in history (line 1)
You may shoot me with your words, (line 21)
You may cut me with your eyes (line 22)
You may kill me with your hatefulness (line 23)

Show the dare devil poetic persona's attitude of calling her listener's bluff, the interrogative sentences, such as the following:

Does my sassiness upset you? (line 5)
Why are you beset with gloom? (line 6)

Did you want to see me broken? (line 13)
Does my haughtiness offend you? (line 25)
Does my sexiness upset you? (line 25)

have the illocutionary force of probing the reasons for the oppressor's oppressive tendencies which are to the detriment of the poetic persona. Again, both simple and complex sentences are used in a good measure in the poem. There is cohesion in the structural patterns of the poem through the use of the conjunctions, 'but' and 'like' as we have in the following lines:

But still, like dust, I'll rise (line 4)
Just like hopes springing high, (line 11)
But still, like air, I'll rise, (line 24).

Bondage, on the other hand, manifests through the use of subordinators like 'cause' (because) and 'that' as shown in the following lines:

Why are you beset with gloom?
"Cause I walk like I've got oil wells (lines 7-8)
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines (lines 18-19)
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds (lines 26-27).

The use of these devices, especially, bondage (which shows dependency) probably depicts the servitude in which the Black American slaves were to their white masters while slavery lasted in America. Most of the simple sentences utilized in the poem are inverted as follows for stylistic effect:

...like dust, I'll rise (line 4)
Still I'll rise (line 12) ...
...like air I'll rise (line 24)
Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise (lines 31 - 32)
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise (lines 37-38)

Inverting structures in a text manifests one of the concepts of style known as deviation from the norm, and it is a form of foregrounding inversion in this poem may have to do with the audacious poetic-persona doing the unusual by confronting her oppressor-listener. Besides, and very importantly, the fronting of the adjuncts in the above-cited structures is a means by which emphasis is achieved.

3.4 Lexico-semantic Features

Although, a cursory look at the poem would suggest that the reader might not have difficulty in understanding the message in it, it is noteworthy that the poem employs some words and expressions that demand a careful analysis for their meanings to be properly decoded. This is because such words are not usual collocations – a situation which creates some stylistic effects. Such unusual collocations include the ‘words’ in ‘You may shoot me with your words, ‘cut’ and ‘eyes’ in ‘You may cut me with your eyes’, ‘kill’ and ‘hatefulness’ in ‘You may kill me with your hatefulness’ and ‘black’ and ‘ocean’ in ‘I am black ocean. They bring about strikingly metaphoric meanings that draw the reader closer to the import of the poet’s message. It is not unlikely that the poet does this to show the inequality between the white masters and the black American slaves.

Apart from metaphor, simile is also employed by the poet to some stylistic advantages. The simile in each of ‘...like dust’, ‘... like air...’ and ‘...like I’ve got diamonds’ creates an imagery which helps in enhancing the reader’s understanding of the message in the poem.

4.0 CONCLUSION

On the whole, Maya Angelou’s poem, “Still I Rise” deploys rich poetic devices to a number of purposes such as explaining, illustrating, revealing and clarifying. Note, however, that the analysis provided here is not exhaustive, but it can guide you in doing a meaningful analysis of any poem you may encounter.

5.0 SUMMARY

In reading a poem, you should pay attention to its content, form and language. Your analysis should also be well organized and there must be evidence for any observation you make. You should realize that effective reading of a poem is essential to its productive analysis. It is only when you read and understand a poem thoroughly that you can attempt its meaningful analysis.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (a) Carry out a stylistic analysis of the poem below at the graphological, phonological, syntactic and lexico-semantic levels:

The Negro speaks of Rivers

I’ve known rivers:

I’ve known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers
I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln

Went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy
Bosom turn all golden in the sunset
I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers. (Langston Hughes)

7.0 REFERENCES/ FURTHER READING

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