

A Linguistic Stylistics Analysis of the Poem 'Breakfast' by Jacques Prévert in the English Language Teaching Context

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1.0 Introduction

Stylistics is a study concerned with linguistic style in texts and literary works. It is called literary linguistics, which focuses on figures, images, and other devices like rhetorics in different texts. However, because of the linguistic complexity and sphinx nature, ESL teachers and learners are reluctant to teach and learn in the typical classroom, and teachers explain grammar and reading comprehension passages. According to Denman (1988), cited in Khan(2020), most teachers are reluctant to consider poems as language teaching components in the Sri Lankan context. Stylistic analysis recognizes linguistic elements, classifies them, and interprets any potential literal meanings in a text.

Teaching and learning poems in the ELT context can introduce or practice new lexical, syntactical, morphological and orthographical aspects in writing. Compared to a short story or essay, shorter poems enable ELLs to comprehend the idea as they are manageable amounts of text. (Khan,2020, p. 805) explains that poetry is a tool for enhancing language abilities and acting as a language model.

The study signifies how language structures can be learned through a poem and by dissecting the language in the style-based linguistic aspects, which seems inadequate in the Sri Lankan context as most ESL learners and teachers are reluctant to learn and teach poems as it is challenging. The objective of the paper is to analyse the text of Jacques Prévert's 'Breakfast' at four levels of linguistic stylistics analysis: graphological, lexical, morphological and syntactical to learn language and linguistic skills.

Research question: How does stylistic analysis of a poem explore the language nuances and the structural patterns at the various linguistic levels to comprehend the text in the ELT context?

2.0 Literature Review

"Stylistics is an analytical science covering all the expressive aspects of language phonology, prosody, morphology, syntax and lexicology" (Khan_et al., 2014). "Style is a way in which a writer utilizes the linguistic means at his disposal to produce a definite effect on the reader" (Pretorius, 1982), as cited in Imran et al. (2021).

According to (Birch, 2005), stylistic analysis of a poem reveals how poetic style provokes effects and meanings of the poem. Stylistic analysis reveals different poets' styles instead of how the poet chooses specific patterns and vocabulary in a stanza, such as drawing the poem's meaning using linguistic properties. Leech (2014) points out that

style is how something is spoken, written or expressed. Short and Leech (1981) have the considerations that the writers use style according to the context, and it has definite meanings. According to Carter (1996), stylistics is a method that examines the text deeply from different perceptions. Short and Leech (1981) argued that style is a school of thought. Carter and McCarthy (2014) state that stylistics bridges linguistics and literature. Hedge (2000) asserts that "poems work as authentic material and can be used to enhance the receptive skill of reading".

3.0 Methodology

The researcher chose the poem 'Breakfast' by Jacques Pervert for analysis as it is one of the poems in the GCE (O/L) literature curriculum. The researcher analyzed the poem at various linguistic levels, such as graphological, lexical, morphological and syntactical. The words from different parts of speech, phrases, clauses and sentences were categorized, coded and labelled manually by reading the poetry. The heuristic checklist of linguistic and stylistic models presented by Leech and Short (2007) was used to analyze the data. The qualitative method was mainly used to analyze the collected data to make the analysis more comprehensive. However, the researcher used the Warsito (1992) formula $P = (F/N \times 100)$ to quantitatively analyze the probability and percentage.

4.0 Data Analysis, Findings and Discussion

4.1. Graphological level

The lines of the poem vary in length, symbolizing the specific uneven nature of the situation. The poet does not pay much attention to punctuation, which gives the idea of no end to this dispute of the couple in the poem 'Breakfast'. The poet uses the full stop only once in the poem, symbolizing the end of the relationship, and there are no other punctuation marks to express the different moods of the characters in the poem. The poetic lines start with simple letters except for three places: He poured, Put the sugar, *And lit a cigar*. It is observed that there is no stanza division in the poem, and it constantly moves at a stretch from the beginning to the end. Therefore, the poet used the graphological devices of stanzaic pattern, spacing, lineation, punctuation, and capitalization to express the depth of the meaning.

4.2. Lexical level

The lexicons like *emptied, ash, buried, cried, raining, and smoke* indicate the sad and conflicting mood of the scene. The poet uses the preposition *without* four times, which expresses the negative attitude and deprivation. Since the poet mentions the pronoun *He* repetitively, it seems the wife releases her feelings and emotions about her husband inwardly. The poet uses only adverbial phrases to reveal factual information. The poet uses phrasal verbs lavishly, such as *put on, got up, put down, put back and look at*, to indicate actions and bring the natural, casual conversational effect in the poem and, in words, *stir, pour, smoke, blew rings, lit, and put.*, revealing the imagery motion. The

writer repeatedly uses the objective personal pronoun 'me' in the lines, *without speaking to me* (2) *without looking at me*, to show how the husband ignores his wife. The poet simplifies the language without harsh words while portraying the sorrowful, rigid situation.

4.3. Morphological level

The poem consists of three free compound morphemes, endocentric compounds such as *ashtray*, *teaspoon*, and *raincoat*, a great indicator for introducing morphology. The poet uses functional compound morphemes, such as *into* and *without*, four times to emphasize his idea and the empty feeling of the wife when the husband ignores her. Inflectional morphemes –' ed' is used to indicate the past tense—the reason the poet has purposely used the past tense to bring up the past incident. "The minimal units of meaning are known as morpheme" (Andrea Krott, 2001). The author uses many free morphemes in the poem, though there are some inflectional bound morphemes such as –ing, -s, -es and –ed, the minimal units.

4.4. Syntactical level

The poet uses precisely the same sentence structural patterns repetitively, and it has eleven simple sentence patterns, only four compound sentences, and no complex sentences. The SVO patterns in the poem emphasizes the doer rather than the action. In the clauses *He poured*, *He put the milk*, *put the sugar*, and *stirred* the pronoun *He*, a repetition usage of the pronoun *He*, indicates how vital the doer is in the poem. The use of inverse word order in a few occurrences is a unique feature in the lyrics. Considering the poetic line, 'It was raining', 'It' is an indefinite nominative of an impersonal pronoun, a dummy subject which is a syntactic feature with no semantic function. So, the verb 'raining' is called an impersonal verb. This sentence is ostensive, pointing at the rain. As a matter of grammar that would separate agent and action, the rain is raining.

In addition, the noun *ash* suggests the death of a relationship. The writer's lines are very plain with heavy meanings; however, the poet creates an emotional atmosphere. Though he has not targeted any emotional words directly, the readers who dive into the poem can identify the depth of the internal meaning. Through syntactic structures, the poet has brought up the semantic feature successfully.

Table 1
Sentence pattern found in the poem 'Breakfast.'

SN	Sentences (taken from the poem)	Sentence Pattern
1	He poured the coffee into the cup	S V OA
2	He put the milk into the cup of coffee	S V OA
3	He put the sugar into the coffee with milk	SVOA
4	With a small spoon, he stirred	(A) SV
5	He drank the coffee, and he put down the cup	SVO + S VO
6	Without speaking to me, he lit the cigarette	(A)SVO
7	He emptied the coffee with milk	S V O A
8	And he put down the cup.	SVO

9	He lighted (Cigarette)	SV(O)
10	He made circles	SVO
11	He shook off the ash into the ashtray	SVOA
12	He got up because it was raining.	SVintr +SVintr
13	And he left	SVintr
14	And I buried my hands into the face.	SVOA
15	And I cried	SVintr

Fig. 1 shows that 38% of the sentences are SV, 24% of the sentences are SVO, and 38% of the sentences are SVOA. According to the statistics, SV and SVO are equal amounts. **Fig.2** shows the complexity of noun phrases embedded with the prepositional phrase. Though the words seem simple, the multiple embedding forms the noun phrase complexity, and many of the phrases are exocentric.

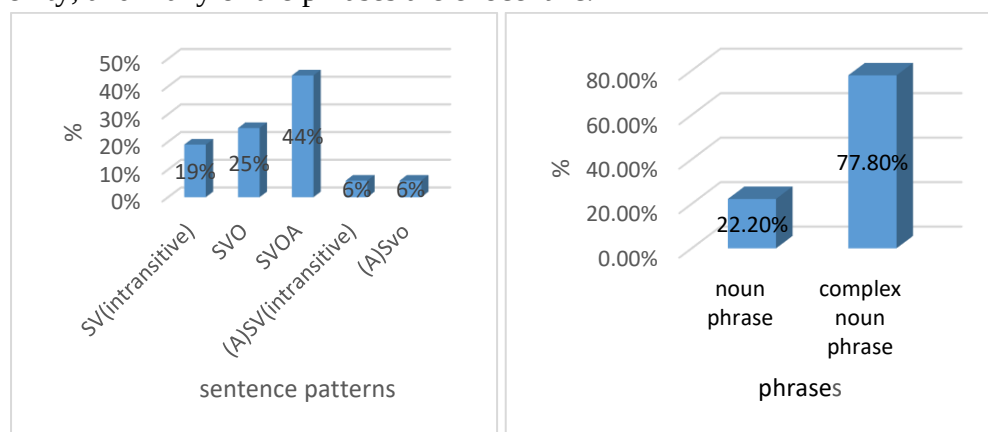


Figure 1: The sentence patterns used. **Figure 2:** The phrases used

5.0. Conclusion

Stylistic linguistic analysis evokes the unfathomable hidden meanings and language nuances at various linguistic levels, such as graphological, lexical, morphological and syntactical; ESL learners develop the skill of comprehending the authors' writing philosophies underneath the poem. Further, the analysis helps ESL learners improve their language skills in critical and analytical thinking as it is one of the effective techniques to master a second language. Moreover, "poems can also be used to build writing skills by making students rewrite, report or translate the poem" (Sheila, Hessler & Konrad, 2007 p 805). Stylistics is closely related to linguistic and literary criticism, which examines how language and the meanings of texts are communicated. Therefore, analyzing the poems at various linguistic levels gives the learners linguistic expertise and a better understanding of the poem.

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