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**A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE POEM “THE
PROFESSOR”**

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ABSTRACT

The paper provides stylistic analysis of Nissim Ezekiel’s Poem “The Professor”. The poem has been analysed at different levels of stylistic analysis such as phonological, lexical and morphological, syntactic, semantic and graphological. The purpose of this study is to explore and analyse the stylistic devices which the poet has exploited in the poem to make its meaning effective to the readers. The analysis of the poem revealed use of several stylistic devices in the poem which include: alliteration, assonance, consonance, affixation, compounding, collocations, idiomatic and colloquial expressions, deviant use of interrogative sentences, parallelism, reduplication, simile metaphors, varied punctuation and capitalization at various levels of stylistic analysis. The use of such stylistic devices in the poem refers to an individual style of the poet which distinguishes him from the others.

Keywords: Style, Stylistics, Stylistic Analysis, Nissim Ezekiel, Poem

Introduction

Stylistics is a field of linguistics that studies ‘style’ in literary or non-literary texts. The horizon of stylistics has broadened and it is now also applied to study style in non-literary texts. Though the study of style may be applied to non-literary texts yet it is traditionally and primarily attached to analysing style in literary texts. Anyway, the prime goal of stylistics is to do ‘study of style’. Leech and Short (1981:13) remarks that “stylistics is the study of style, it describes that what is used and how is used to make of language.” Here, the word ‘style’, in general, refers to a way or manner of doing something but, in stylistics, it primarily refers to the manner of expressions employed in literary texts. Cuddon (2013: 688) defines style as “the characteristic manner of expression in prose or verse; how a particular writer says things”. However, stylistics analysis which deals with identifying and analysing style is primarily concerned with analysing language of the literary texts. According to Cuddon (2013: 688), “the analysis

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and assessment of style involves examination of a writer's choice of words, his figure of speech, the devices (rhetorical and otherwise), the shape of his sentences (whether they be loose or periodic), the shape of his paragraph—indeed, of every conceivable aspect of his language and the way in which he uses it”. Thus, stylistic analysis provides a detailed and minute study of linguistic elements employed in the literary texts.

However, stylistic analysis plays a very significant role in understanding any literary text in a scientific way. Overall, it helps understand the content, form and the deeper meanings of the texts. Therefore, stylistics functions as a mediator between linguistics and literary criticism (Widdowson 1975).

The field of stylistics has been an interesting field of linguistic study. It has drawn the attention of many scholars. Some of them who have contributed significantly in the field of linguistics are Barry (1995), Leech (1969), Leech and Short (1981), Widdowson (1975), Birch (1989), Freeman (1981), Simpson (2004) and Wales (2011). Some of the Indian scholars who have contributed significantly are Srivastava (1980; 1986), Koul (1986), Kumar (1987), Gargesh (1990) and Sharma (1990). Among them, Srivastava (1980) and Gargesh (1990) attempted stylistic study from the perspective of semiolinguistics, a different and new approach of stylistic analysis.

In the last ten years, research works on the topic have been accomplished by many scholars. Gargesh (2010) analyses stylistic features in a South Asian text. Further, Tafreshi (2010) and Gargesh (2011) conduct stylistic analysis of Persian and Hindi text respectively from the perspective of semiolinguistics. Moreover, Bilal & Cheema (2012) and Batool et. al. (2016) study styles in William Wordsworth's poems. Besides, Khan et. al. (2014) accomplishes stylistic analysis of Robert Frost's poem whereas Putri (2018) achieves stylistic features in Thomas Hardy's poem. Other scholars who have also attempted to study stylistic features in some varied literary texts include Ali et. al. (2016), Manuel (2017) and Isti'anah (2017). Some scholars who have accomplished research on the texts of Indian English poets include Ray (2017), Atashgah (2018) and Rajbanshi & Patra (2019). Ray (2017) analyzes style in Nissim Ezekile's poem, 'The Patriot' whereas Atashgah (2018) studies style in the poem of Kamla Das. Further, Rajbanshi & Patra (2019) investigates stylistic features in the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra.

The research works accomplished in the last ten years on stylistic analysis of the literary texts suggest that the scholars have mostly

attempted to analyse the texts of famous English poets like Wordsworth, Robert Frost, William Blake and many others. The research works accomplished on the literary texts of Indian English poets are in sufficient or far from adequate. In fact, research works in the field of stylistics particularly on Indian poets needs to be achieved by at least Indian linguists. Therefore, in light of this gap, the present paper attempts to provide stylistic analysis of Nissim Ezekiel's poem 'the Professor'. The purpose of selecting the poem of this poet is that he is one of the prominent figures in Indian Writing in English. Further, he is very much popular for his use of extraordinary poetic language especially the use of Indianized forms of English in his poems. Overall, his choice of words, experimentation with language and use of figurative devices also serve the basis for stylistic analysis of his poem, 'The Professor'. The present study tries to explore and analyse stylistic devices as employed by the poet through which he tries to convey the message of the poem aesthetically to the readers.

Levels of Stylistic Analysis

These are the following levels of stylistic analysis at which language of any poem(s) can be analysed:

Phonological Level: At this level, phonetic and phonological features or devices are identified in the poem. Some of the phonological features that are identified in the poem include rhyme, alliteration, consonance and assonance.

Lexical Level: This level of stylistic analysis deals with the patterns of word formation in the poetic language. Some of the lexical and morphological features or devices that are identified in the poem include compounding, affixation, reduplication, collocations, and hybridization. Sometimes, new words are also coined by the poets to use in the poem and to create special effect to the readers of the poems.

Syntactic Level: The syntactic level of stylistic analysis deals with the structural patterns of language in the poem. At this level, identification of different categories or types of phrase, clause and sentences in the poem are done and analyzed. Sometimes, deviant use of article, omission of article, and deviant formation of interrogative sentences are also identified in the language of the poem. The main objective of this level is to study the internal structure of the sentences used in the poem.

Semantic Level: This level of stylistic analysis deals with the meanings of words, phrases and sentences. Some of the semantic

devices that can be identified and discussed in the poem include Simile, metaphor, hyperbole and personification.

Graphological Level: This level of stylistic analysis deals with the composing style of the language in the poem. It mainly includes capitalization of words and sentences, punctuation patterns and apostrophe to create aesthetic effect in the poem.

The Poet and the Poem

Nissim Ezekiel is one of the prominent Indian poets who wrote in English. He was born in a Jewish family in 1924 in Bombay. He received his early education from the University of Bombay and then he moved to England for his higher study. When he came back to India he started his career as a lecturer at Khalsa College, Bombay. Then he became reader and professor of American literature at University of Bombay. He had been also a visiting professor to the university of Leeds (1964) and University of Chicago (1967). He was also awarded Sahitya Akademi Award (1983) and Padma Shree (1988) for his contribution in the field of Indian Poetry in English. He wrote many prose and poetry. The poem 'Night of the Scorpion' is very much popular poem of him.

The poem, 'The Professor' is a satirical poem. This poem is in the form of dramatic monologue in which the professor appears to have conversation with his old student. In this poem, the professor who introduces himself to his student as Seth and claims that once he taught his student geography. After this, the professor starts telling about himself and his family members. He boasts himself that his sons are settled in life and they are at good positions in their jobs. He even highlights their social position by saying that they have cars as having cars is a matter of prestige in the Indian society. At the same time he feels disappointed about his third son and refers to him as a 'black sheep'. Then he talks about his daughters who are married and he is having eleven grandchildren. He also enquires his student about his sons and daughters. Then he shows his concern about how things are changing quickly. He also shows his concern that old values to which he is attached is also being replaced by the new values. Next, the poet talks about his health and age related issues but he happily accepts that he is away from some common disease like diabetes, blood pressure and heart attack. He happily shares with his student that he is fit and fine even at the age of sixty-nine because of his good habits from his youth. Then he remarks at his student that earlier he was very lean and thin but now he has put on weight and has also gained some social position. Finally, he

invites his student to visit him sometime at his residence. Thus, this poem is satirical in nature and it satires on the Indianness.

The poem is not only interesting to go through but the innovative use of language particularly the use of non-standard English or Indian English in the poem makes it remarkable for the stylistic analysis.

Methodology

In order to carry out stylistic analysis of the poem '*The Professor*', certain things will be followed. First, a close reading of the text will be done. Then different stylistic features employed by the poet will be identified and analysed at different levels of linguistic analysis such as phonological, lexical and morphological, syntactic, semantic and graphological. Then it follows a discussion on the same.

Stylistic Analysis of the Poem: '*The Professor*'

Phonological Level

The significant phonological features identified at this level in the poem are *alliteration*, *assonance* and *consonance*. These phonological features attribute to the internal rhyme of the poem. Consider these features below:

Alliteration

Alliteration is "a figure of speech in which consonants, especially at the beginning of words, or stressed syllables, are repeated" (Cuddon 2013: 22). The use of alliteration device in the poem creates internal rhyme in the poem. It is used to bring musical effect to the poem. Some of the examples of alliteration identified in the poem are: '*By God's grace..*' (line 5), '*...believe but...*' (line 14), '*How have?*' (line 15), '*That is good. These...*' (line 16), '*...Our progress is progressing*' (line 19), '*Old values, new values ...*' (line 20), '*No diabetes, no blood pressure, no heart attack*' (line 25), '*How health keeping?*' (line 27), '*.... so thin, ... stick*' (line 31), '*... coming Chance*' (line 34). In the above example repetitions of the consonant sounds like [g], [b], [h], [t], [p], [v], [n], [s] and [c] create alliteration in the poem.

Assonance

Assonance is also one of the phonological devices that occur frequently in the poetic language. In the words of Cuddon (2013: 56) assonance is "sometimes called 'vocalic rhyme', it consists of the repetition of similar vowel sounds, usually close together, to achieve a particular effect of euphony". Some of the examples of

alliteration identified in the poem, *The Professor* include: 'Remember me? I am Professor Sheth'(line 1), 'Once I taught you geography. Now' (line 2), 'I am retired, though my health is good' (line 3), 'My wife died some years back' (line 4), 'Are well settled in life' (line 6), 'One is Sales Manager' (line 7), 'Other also doing well, though not so well' (line 10), 'We are keeping up. Our progress is progressing' (line 19), 'This is because of sound habits in youth' (line 26), and 'If you are coming again this side by chance' (line 34). In the above-motivated examples, the repetitions of the vowel sounds such as [o], [i], [a], [e], [u] can be observed. It is also noticeable that the semi vowel sound such as [y] has been also repeated in the words of the sentence.

Consonance

Like assonance, consonance is also one of the phonological or sound devices in poetic language that creates internal rhyme or musicality in the poem. According to Cuddon (2013: 153) "consonance is the close repetition of identical consonant sounds before and after different vowels". The poem, *The Professor* shows several examples of consonance such as 'Remember me? I am Professor Sheth' (line 1), 'I am retired, though my health is good' (line 3), 'By God's grace, all my children...' (line 5), 'One is Bank Manager' (line 8), 'Every family must have black sheep' (line 11), 'Everything is happening with leaps and bounds' (line 21), 'I am going out rarely, now and then' (line 22), 'This is because of sound habits in youth' (line 26), 'You were so thin, like stick' (line 31), and 'I am living just on opposite house's backside' (line 36). The consonance comprises of the consonant sounds such as [m], [r], [d], [n], [l], [p], [t], [k] and [s] in the poem.

Lexical and Morphological Level

Lexicons that build up the poem are of different categories such as nominal, verbal, adjectival and adverbials. All these categories of lexicons are organized in the poem in a very well knit manner. Besides, inclusion of lexicons from different grammatical categories, this level also finds use of some morphological devices such as affixation, compounding and collocations in the poem. Each of these has been discussed in detail below:

Lexicons from Nominal Category

Lexicon of nominal category identified in the poem include the following: 'professor', 'geography', 'health', 'wife', 'years', 'God', 'children', 'life', 'manager', 'cars', 'family', 'sheep', 'husbands', 'boys', 'grandchildren', 'days', 'family', 'times', 'world', 'progress', 'values', 'price',

'age', 'heart', 'youth', 'century', 'residence', 'house'. Most of these are common nouns and abstract nouns. Some of the proper nouns have also been used in the poem by the poet. These include Indian names and surname such as 'Sheth', 'Sarala', 'Tarala' and 'India'. Names of some common disease have been also mentioned in the poem which include 'diabetes', 'blood pressure', and 'heart attack'. Some numerals have also been also included in the poem such as 'One', 'Three', 'eleven', 'sixty-nine', and 'century'.

Lexicons from Verbal Category

Use of several lexicons from the category of verb has been identified in the poem. These include the following: 'doing' (10), 'changing' (line 18), 'progressing' (line 19), 'going' (line 20), 'coming' (line 20), 'happening' (line 21), 'going' (line 20), 'coming' (line 34), 'living' (line 36). Some of the verbs have been used in the root forms like 'remember' (line 1), 'believe' (line 14), and 'change' (line 17). Some of the verbs are also used in the past tense verbs such as 'taught' (line 2) and 'died' (line 4).

Lexicon from Adjectival and Adverbial Categories

Lexicons from adjectival category of words have been also used in the poem to modify or qualify nouns. Some of them include the following: 'good' (line 3), 'black' (line 11), 'nice' (line 13), 'Old' (line 20), 'new' (line 20), 'happy' (line 28), 'thin' (line 31), and 'humble' (line 35). Use of some of the adverbs can also be observed in the poem. These have been used to qualify adjectives in the poem. These include the following: 'Once' (line 2), 'Now' (line 2, 22), 'well' (line 6), 'very' (line 13), 'then' (line 22), and 'rarely' (line 22).

At Morphological level several devices have been identified in the poem. Each of them has been discussed below in detail:

Affixation

It is the process of attaching prefixes or suffixes to the existing words to make new words or to change the grammatical categories of the words. Various examples of affixation process as used in the poem either to make new words or to change the grammatical categories of the existing words have been identified. Some of the examples of affixation identified in the poems include the following: 'doing' (10), 'Planning' (line 16), 'changing' (line 18), 'progressing' (line 19), 'going' (line 20), 'coming' (line 20), 'happening' (line 21), 'rarely' (line 22) and 'Nicely' (line 28).

Compounding

Another morphological device that has been identified in the poem 'The Professor' of Nissim Ezekiel is compounding. It is also one of the processes of forming new words through juxtaposing two different words together. Consider some examples of compound words used in the poem: '*Sales Manager*'(line 7), '*Bank Manager*'(line 8), '*black sheep*' (line 11), '*grandchildren*'(line 14), '*family planning*'(line 16),and '*sixty-nine*' (line 29).

Collocations

It refers to the process of forming compound words by juxtaposing two words from the English language. In this process, the new compound words formed are normally uncommon in British or Standard English language. The poet, Nissim Ezekiel, too, has formed a few compound words through using collocation in the poem. Consider the following examples of collocation from the poem: '*sound habits*' (line 26), and '*humble residence*' (line 35).

Syntactic Level

At this level several syntactic devices that have been used at the level of sentence structure in the poem have been identified and discussed. Syntactic devices that have been identified in the poem '*The Professor*' include the following: '*use of idiomatic phrases*', '*colloquial expressions*', '*deviant use of progressive tense*', '*deviant use of interrogative sentences*', '*reduplication*' and '*parallelism*'. All of these syntactic devices have been discussed below in detail:

Idiomatic Expressions

Many idiomatic expressions from English language have been incorporated at the sentential structure in the language of the poem. These include: '*By God's grace*' (line 5), '*well settled*' (line 6), '*black sheep*' (line 11), '*leaps and bounds*'(line 21), '*now and then*' (line 22), and '*by chance*' (line 34). The use of such idiomatic expressions makes the language of the poem very more poetic.

Colloquial Expressions

Besides use of idiomatic expressions, there are some colloquial expressions that have been used by the poet in the poem to make the language more colloquial in nature. Some colloquial expressions identified in the poem include: '*One is Sales Manager*' (line 7), '*One is Bank Manager*' (line 8), '*We have to change with times*' (line 17), '*Whole world is changing*' (line 18), '*Our progress is progressing*'(line 19), and '*Old values are*

going, new values are coming' (line 20). These colloquial expressions used in the poem appear to be very common in use by Indian people.

Progressive Tense

One of the most important features of the language of the poem at syntactic level is that it mostly uses present progressive tense for expressing many important things. The examples of the use of main verbs in progressive tense are the following: '*Whole world is changing*' (line 18), '*We are keeping up*' (line 19), '*Our progress is progressing*' (line 19), '*Old values are going, new values are coming*' (line 20), '*Everything is happening*' (line 21), and '*How is your health keeping?*' (line 27).

Further, the use of present progressive tense is also observable for conditional sentence like '*If you are coming again this side by chance*' (line 34). Moreover, the poet has also used stative verb like 'live' in progressive tense as in example: '*I am living just on opposite house's backside*' (line 36).

Deviant Use of Interrogative Sentences

The deviant use of interrogative sentences can be also identified in the poem. Here, the interrogative sentences have been formed without adding auxiliary verb with the main verb. Consider the following examples of interrogative sentence formulation in this manner: '*Other also doing well*' (line 10) and '*How many issues you have? Three?*' (line 15). Sometimes, sentences without subject can be also observed as in example: '*Remember me?*' (line 1) and '*Nicely?*' (28).

Reduplication

Reduplication is the process of repeating lexical items in the sentence. Mostly, lexical items are repeated at least twice or thrice but can be also repeated more than twice or thrice. Some examples of reduplications identified in the poem are marked in bold: '*No diabetes, no blood pressure, no heart attack*' (line 25), '*One is Sales Manager... One is Bank Manager*' (line 8) '*Other also doing well, though not so well*' (line 10), '*Our progress is progressing*' (line 19), '*Old values are going, new values are coming*' (line 20). Here, in these examples, lexical items such as 'no', 'one', 'well', 'progress' and 'values' are repeated almost twice in the sentences.

Parallelism

It's a syntactic device that "consists of phrases or sentences of similar construction and meaning placed side by side, balancing each other" (Cuddon 2013: 511). Some examples of

parallelism identified in the poem are: 'One is Sales Manager, One is Bank Manager' (lines 7-8), 'Old values are going, new values are coming' (lines 20), and 'No diabetes, no blood pressure, no heart attack' (lines 25). Here, in the first two examples, sentences of the similar category are placed together whereas in the last example the similar phrases of similar structure are placed within a sentence of the poem.

Semantic Level

At this level, only simile and metaphor have been identified in the poem.

Simile and Metaphor

It is a figurative device whereby one thing is compared with another. Usually, simile is identified by the use of words such as 'like' or 'as' in the sentences. Only one example of simile has been identified in the poem. Consider the example: 'You were so thin, like stick' (line 31). Further, metaphor is "a figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another. A comparison is usually implicit; whereas in simile it is explicit" (Cuddon 2013:432). Some of the examples of metaphor identified in the poem include the following: 'Every family must have black sheep' (line 11) and 'Now you are man of weight and consequence' (line 32). Here, in the first example of simile, a family member that is his third son has been referred to as 'black sheep'. Similarly, in the second example, the poet metaphorically refers to his student's weight and social power.

Graphological Level

At this level, some of the Graphological features that have been identified in the poem have been discussed. It mainly identified the use of punctuation marks and capitalization in the textual organization of the poem. These two devices have been discussed below:

Punctuation Marks

These include the use of full stop (.), comma (,), semicolon (;), colon (:), dash (-), question mark (?), and apostrophe (') used in the textual part of the poem. The poet has employed 28 full stops, 5 question marks, 14 commas, one dash, and 3 apostrophes in the poem. Semicolon and colon are not employed by the poet in the poem.

Capitalization

The poet Nissim Ezekiel has used capitalization in the poem. It is quite observable that each line of the poem begins with capital letter even though the sentence is incomplete. Proper nouns are also used with capital letters. Further, the abbreviation 'O.K.' has been entirely capitalized by the poet to emphasize and to attract the attention of the readers.

Discussion

At the phonological level, no significant rhyme in the poem has been identified therefore the poem appears to be in free verse. However, some phonological devices like '*alliteration*', '*consonance*' and '*assonance*' have been identified in the language use of the poem. The use of these three creates internal rhyme in the poem.

The lexical and morphological level depicts some significant style features in the poem. The close observation and analysis of the lexical items of the poem reveal the fact that the poet has used a number of lexicons from different grammatical categories such as '*noun*', '*verb*', '*adjective*' and '*adverb*' to form the structure and content of the poem. Moreover, use of some morphological devices such as '*affixation*', '*compounding*' and '*collocations*', at morphological level, in the language of the poem reveal poet's use of innovative language of the poem to attract the readers.

At the level of syntax, use of several stylistic devices such as '*use of idiomatic phrases*', '*colloquial expressions*', '*deviant use of progressive tense*', '*deviant use of interrogative sentences*', '*reduplication*' and '*parallelism*' have been identified in the language of the poem. Use of these syntactic devices, however, refers to the creative or innovative use of language by the poet in the poem. The use of '*use of idiomatic phrases*' and '*colloquial expressions*' makes the language of the poem more conversational in nature. Further, deviant use of '*progressive tense*' and '*interrogative sentences*' refers to the use of nativized or Indianized English in the poem. Moreover, the use of '*reduplication*' and '*parallelism*' adds emphasis and musicality to the poem.

At semantic level of stylistic analysis of the poem, only '*simile*' and '*metaphor*' are observable in the language of the poem. Moreover, the examples of these two devices are identifiable in very less number. In fact, the use of simile and metaphor adds to the figurative use of language in the poem.

Finally, at Graphological level, use of varied punctuation marks and capitalization of words are also observable in the language (text) of the poem. The use of capitalization has been used by the poet to capture the attention of the readers of the poem.

Overall, the poem identifies incorporation of several linguistic devices or tools in the text of the poem.

Conclusion

The paper attempted to analyse style in Nissim Ezekiel's poem 'The Professor'. The stylistic analysis of the poem identified and analysed poet's use of several linguistic devices in the poem at various levels of stylistic analysis. The stylistic analysis of the poem revealed that the composition of the poem in free verse. It also revealed poet's linguistic experimentation and the use of Indianized or nativized variety of English language in the poem. The use of variant stylistic devices in the poem actually enhanced the effectiveness of the message of the poem. However, it also refers to an individual style of the poet which distinguishes him and his works from the others.

The limitation of the present research work can be viewed in terms of the selection of a single poem of a particular poet only.

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Appendix
The Professor

-Nissim Ezekiel

Remember me? I am Professor Sheth.
Once I taught you geography. Now
I am retired, though my health is good.
My wife died some years back.
By God's grace, all my children
Are well settled in life.
One is Sales Manager,
One is Bank Manager,
Both have cars.
Other also doing well, though not so well.

Every family must have black sheep.
Sarala and Tarala are married,
Their husbands are very nice boys.
You won't believe but I have eleven grandchildren.
How many issues you have? Three?
That is good. These are days of family planning.
I am not against. We have to change with times.
Whole world is changing. In India also
We are keeping up. Our progress is progressing.
Old values are going, new values are coming.

Everything is happening with leaps and bounds.
I am going out rarely, now and then
Only, this is price of old age
But my health is O.K. Usual aches and pains.
No diabetes, no blood pressure, no heart attack.
This is because of sound habits in youth.
How is your health keeping?
Nicely? I am happy for that.
This year I am sixty-nine
and hope to score a century.
You were so thin, like stick,
Now you are man of weight and consequence.
That is good joke.
If you are coming again this side by chance,
Visit please my humble residence also.
I am living just on opposite house's backside.

[Source: <https://indianpoetry.wordpress.com>]