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Stylistic Analysis of the Poem 'The Patriot': A Semiolinguistic Approach

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Abstract

The research paper aims to analyze Nissim Ezekiel's Poem 'The Patriot' from the perspective of semiolinguistics. Semiolinguistics as the name implies, is just the result of the convergence of the two different areas called Linguistics and Semiotics. The lingua-stylistic approach attempts to study only the linguistic levels of the text and leaves out the aesthetic levels whereas the semiolinguistic approach which is a lingua-aesthetic approach tries to capture linguistics as well as aesthetic functions of a poem/text. This is done only through the semiotic linkages between linguistics and aesthetics. The poem 'The Patriot' has been taken up for analysis on two counts. First, it is a poem by major contemporary poet of India, Nissim Ezekiel and secondly for his use of 'Indianness' of English in the poem for ironic and humorous purposes. For the stylistic analysis of the poem from the perspective of Semiolinguistics, it follows Srivastava's (1980:63-64) semiolinguistic model of stylistic analysis of a poem which provides organically three integrated levels of analysis of a poem into (L1) Level of the sentence symbol, (L2) Level of the symbol in art, and (L3) Level of the art symbol. However, the stylistic analysis of the poem from semiolinguistic approach reveals not only the linguistic structure but also the aesthetic function of the poem, 'The Patriot' which somehow reflects style of Nissim Ezekiel's poetry.

Keywords: Stylistics Analysis, Semiolinguistic Approach, Nissim Ezekiel, The Patriot

1. Semiolinguistic Approach to the Study of Style

Semiolinguistics as the name implies, is just the result of the convergence of the two different areas called Linguistics and Semiotics. The linguistic approach attempts to study only the linguistic levels of the text and leaves out the aesthetic levels. On the other hand, the lingua-aesthetic approach aims at the relationship between language and literature. This approach through stylistic analysis tries to capture all the functions. This is done only through the semiotic linkages between linguistics and aesthetics.

These two perspectives come under a broad perspective called semiotic perspective, which through language deals with the matrix of sign. Three distinct approaches (generated in India) have been discussed to the study of literary texts. They are Kelkar's *'semiosis'* approach, Gill's *'anthropological semiotic'* approach, and Srivastava's *'semiolinguistic'* approach.

Kelkar's (1987) view does not consider stylistics to be part of linguistics. He believes it to be part of literary criticism. On the other hand, Gill's (1976; 1980) approach is mainly centered upon the semantic analysis of legends, folk-tales, and literary works. This is keeping in mind that language is global in orientation and any language based approach has to be linguistic. For the analysis of a poem, we will adopt the *'Semiolinguistic'* approach of Srivastava (1980). According to Srivastava (1986), the multi-leveled nature of a poem's signification is expressed through the layers of different kinds of sign systems. In fact, the poetic construction is the result of semiosis process which involves the transformation of one level into the other. Srivastava

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(1980: 62-65) has identified within a poem at least three distinct but organically integrated levels – (L1) Level of the sentence symbol, (L2) Level of the symbol in art, and (L3) Level of the art symbol. Each level has some specific unit to discharge a specific function. As all these three levels involve transformation of one level into another, so *'one kind of language is born out of the womb of another kind of language'*. We can see the elaboration of these three levels in the figure given below:

	Symbols	**Unit (in operational terms)**	**Competence**	**Function**
L_3	L_3b Aesthetic Symbol	Art object concretized	Aesthetic	Sentience
	L_3a Art Symbol	Total text/ Discourse or Art Object Created	Artistic/ Textual Competence	Expressive
L_2	Symbols in Art	Limited Text/ Discourse	Communicative	Suggestive or Connotative
L_1	Sentence Symbol	Grammatical Sentence	Linguistic	Discursive/ Logical or denotative

(Srivastava 1980: 63-64)

Figure 1

If we concentrate in the Figure 1, we come to know that (L1) sentence symbols are the main and the unit of analysis is grammatical sentence, and it is linguistic competence which helps the reader to comprehend it. Besides this, the linguistic code makes the reader or analyst to identify the linguistic patterns or deviation of the poem/text. These contain style features.

The (L2) symbols in Art provide connotative function, and the unit of analysis is the Limited Text or Discourse. The readers/analysts start generating meaning with their communicative competence. Here, the text undergoes a process of semiosis and provides not only *style features* but also their functioning other than the Denotative.

Finally, (L3) Art Symbol provides the poem's total signification. Here, we find two levels – L_3a and L_3b. To get the poem's total significance, we need textual competence to study the poem. At this level, the fictive context of the poem is complete. Verbal configuration after the process of semiosis once again allows us to have a close scrutiny of the text construction and stylization process.

The level L_3b provides us the text as an aesthetic object, which is experienced by the reader in his experiential world, and which is at once one and the same and also not one at the same. The reading of a text can vary from reader to reader. In the present analysis this level has not been taken into account for the focus is desired to put only on the process of semiosis in the poem. The above discussion was meant to show the semiotic processes through which the denotative level of the sentence symbols get changed into the connotative level of (L2) the Symbols in Art,

and finally, through further semiosis into (L3) Art Symbol as a text. It is this model that will be followed for the analysis of the Nissim Ezekiel's poem '*The Patriot'*.

2. Stylistic Analysis of the Poem, "*The Patriot''* from Semiolinguistic Perspective

A poem, in this study has been viewed, as a multileveled phenomenon. It may be said that the poem is like a constituent consisting of different constituents. As it has already been discussed in section 1, that the poem as a sign will be studied in the following discussions at the levels of Sentence Symbol, Symbols in Art, and the Art Symbol. It may once again be mentioned that the three levels are only theoretical separations where each lower level from L1 undergoes a process of semiosis to become the next higher level till it reaches level L3. For stylistic analysis, Nissim Ezekiel's poem '*The Patriot'* has been taken up on two counts. First, it is a poem by major contemporary poet of India and secondly he exploits in the poem the 'Indianness' of English for ironic and humorous purposes.

2.1. At the Level of the Sentence Symbol (L1)

In stylistic analysis, the Sentence Symbol centers upon the significant structures as well as linguistic patterns used in a particular poem. Therefore, to attain certain linguistic features of the poem, we need to study the poem at the levels of phonology, lexicon, syntax, and semantics.

2.1.1. The Phonological Level

The significant phonological features are identified at this level which at higher level contributes to the phenomena of poetic rhythm and rhyme. The poem has plenty of internal rhymes in the form of '*alliteration*', '*assonance*', and '*consonance*' as well. Let us look at the significant phonological features one by one.

Alliterationconsists of word initial repetition across stressed syllables of different words. In the poem, 'The patriot' we find the repeated use of perhaps retroflex **t** in expressions like '…***t***otal ***t***eetotaller …***t***otal', (line 26). Other examples of alliteration can be seen in the expressions - …***R***am ***R***ajya… (line 41), '***R***egeneration ***R***emuneration…' (line 19), '…***l***ittle …***l***ovely..' (line 23), and '….***m***ost harassing ***m***e' (line 33) etc. where the repetition of the liquid sounds *r, l,* and the nasal *m* respectively indicate alliteration.

Consonance is a kind of poetic device whereby a consonant sound is repeated in words after the stressed vowel. Examples of *consonance* are the following: '…Sa***l***t love**l**y…' (line 23), '..wa***n***t o***n***e…?' (line 21), Pa**k**istan…li***k***e…' (line 30). The best example of consonance is found in the word '…to***t***al tee***t***o***t***aler …to***t***al' (line 26). The consonance consists of the repetition of the consonantal sounds *l, n, k,* and *t* respectively in the above given examples.

Assonance consists of the repetition of a stressed vowel across words in a line . 'The Patriot' shows less use of assonance. Some examples of assonance are : - '..h***a***ving . . .h***a***bits', (line 38), '..l***i***ttle . . . dr***i***nk' (line 23), where the repetition of the low vowel /a/ and of the short front vowel /i/ comprises assonance.

2.1.2. The Lexical Level

The Lexicon that builds up the poem is of two significant categories. These two categories of words are organized in a very well knit manner. Some Lexicon have present progressive aspect marker, /-ing/ at the end of them. Further, this category of lexicon can be subdivided into two sections. They are '*actional verbs'*, and '*stative verbs*'.

The verbs of action are the followings: *standing, fighting, going, reading, saying, coming, telling, making, harassing*. The stative verbs are: *tasting, behaving, believing, enjoying* etc.

Some verbs are in the root forms like '*throw' (*line 14*)*, '*visit*' *(*line 43*)*, and 't*olerate' (*line 39*)*. Some numerals have been also used in the poem. For e.g., '*100%, and 200%*' (line 6-7).

At this level several words can be seen to be repeated in the lines such as '*wine* ' in lines 24-25, '*correct*' in lines 6-7, and '*peace*' in lines 2-3-29. Each of the words has been repeated either twice or thrice.
The expression '*fighting fighting'* (line 2) reveals reduplication. Finally, colloquial expressions like '*Ram Rajya*' (line 41), '*Hindiwallahs*' (line 36), and '*Indirabehn*' (line 14) have been taken from the Indian setting.

2.1.3. The Syntactic Level
It is the syntactic level of the poem that reveals important aspects of the poem. The poem is kind of *monologue*. The main syntactic feature is that the main verbs of many expressions in the poem are in the present progressive tense. Further, the present progressive tense either is in 'affirmative' or in the 'negative'. The examples are the following: '*... am standing*' (line 1), '*...fighting fighting*' (line 2), '*…is neglecting*' (line 8), '*...am thinking*' (line 15), '*…am saying*' (line 16) etc. The examples of negative progressive tense are: '*…not following (*line 4)', '*...not understanding' (*line 5)', '*...not believing*' (line 45) etc.
The poem also reveals the use of 'present progressive tense' in place of present indefinite tense. For examples, *thinking, making, believing, enjoying, behaving, harassing, following* should be used in present indefinite tense in place of present progressive tense. In the deeper level, progressive, aspect marker/-ing/has been used for 'universal present indefinite or present habitual'. We can see the examples of this in the following lines: *'Are not following Mahatma Gandhi'* (line 4), *'I am simply not understanding'* (line 5), *'I am not believing in ceremony ' (line 45)* etc.
The present progressive tense has also been used to indicate the future tense in the poem. Some examples are the following:
'*Everything is coming* (line 18) in place of '*Everything will come*', 'One day *Ram Rajya is surely coming'* (line 41) in place of *'One day Ram Rajya will surely come'*.
In the structure of progressives, auxiliary verbs have been used but sometimes they are missing too from sentences like '*Really,most harassing me*' (line 33), ' *Pakistan behaving like this'* (line 30)', ' *China behaving like that' (line 31) etc.*
Besides tense, we get the patterns of '*yes/no*' question forms where not a single auxiliary in any question has been fronted before the subject (as it is the grammatical rule for 'yes/no' question in English). Several examples of these types are found in the lines 2, 21, 29, 42 which are as follow: '*why world is fighting fighting'* (line 2), '*you want one glass lassi?'*(line 21), '*what you think of prospects of world peace?*' (line 29), '*You are going* ?' (line 42) etc.
The pattern of tag questions too is different. Here, the word '*no*' functions as a tag question, for example '*All men are brothers, no?*' (line 34).
In lines 10-11, we find repetition of the same progressive form '*I am reading*': '*Other day I'm reading in newspaper'* (line 10), '*Every day I'mreading Times of India'* (line 11), which is used instead of the past progressive and the habitual indefinite forms.
It is also noteworthy that the first three stanzas (1,2,3) of the poem begin with the assertive sentence while the rest of the stanzas (4, 5, 6) begin with interrogative sentences: '*I am standing for peace andnon-violence' (stanza 1),'Other day I'm reading newspaper' (stanza 2), 'Lend me the ears' (stanza 3), 'You want one glass lassi?' (stanza 4), 'What you think of prospects of world peace?'(Stanza 5), 'You are going? (Stanza 6).*
At the syntactic level we find some 'inappropriate' uses of articles in places where they are generally not used. These can be noted in sentences like '*Lend me* ***the*** *ears*' (line 17), '*...ever tasting* ***the*** *wine'* (line 25), '***the*** *total teetotaller...*' (line 26), '*...for* ***the*** *drunkards only*' (line 28).
The poem also reveals examples of the deletion of articles where they should normally be used. Examples *'What you think of prospects of world peace?'* (line 29) . Here the article '*the'* has not

been used before '*prospects*'. Beyond this, there is also a deviant use of preposition in the sentence *'You want one glass Lassi?.* The preposition '*of* 'is missing from its position between '*glass'* and '*lassi'*. Also the expression shows the non-use of *'do'* in the yes-no questions.

At the phrasal level too, the poem reveals several other syntactic deviation or innovation:

(i) The poem consists of noun phrases involving the process of *Noun + Conjunction + Noun*. Examples are the following: '*...peace and non-violence'* (line 1), '*fashion and foreign thing*' (line 9).

(ii) Some *Noun phrases* have been formed by using modifiers. They are basically [*Modifier + Noun*]. There are several NPs of this category. Examples: '*Modern generation*' (line 8), '*lovely drink*' (line 23), '*funny habits*' (line 38), '*Indian wisdom*' (line 6).

(iii) **NP representing a reduced phrase:** In this process NP has been formed by reducing a complete phrase into a modifier noun combination. Examples of this kind of NPs are the following: '*goonda fellow*' (line 13), '*Indian wisdom*' (line 6), '*World peace*' (line 29) , *'one glass lassi'* (line 21) etc..

A similar type of reduction can be also observed at the level of construction of clauses. Some examples are:

'*Student unrest fellow*'(line 15), '*little salt lovely drink*' (line 23), and '*the total teetotaller...total*' (line 26).

Further, the suffix /-ly/ has been used to form adverbs. Some examples are: '...patient***ly'*** (line 20), love***ly*** (line 23), complete***ly***(line 26).

2.1.4. The Semantic Level

The semantic level of the poem primarily deals with the features involving semantics. First, the poem as a *monologue* depicts the semantic that the patriot wants to be a *good speaker* as he uses the expression – '*Friends, Romans, Countrymen*' (line 16) although he is addressing only himself. This expression is the example of intertexuality for the expression has been 'borrowed' from Shakespeare's play 'Julius Caeser'. The very first line of the poem reveals that the 'I' of the poem is a kind of man who has passion and love for his country and is the follower of Mahatma Gandhi.

Further, we see that the poem contains some metaphoric expressions like (i) *'Ram Rajya is surely coming*' (line 41), (ii) '*All men are brothers, no?*' (line 34), and (iii) '*Why... not following Mahatma Gandhi*' (line 3-4). In (i), '*Ram Rajya*' although it is [-animate] has been given the attribute of [+animate]. The expression in (ii) is a dead metaphor for this expression is used for the equality of man . On the other hand, the expression in (iii) is also a dead metaphor for here the principles of Mahatma Gandhi have been highlighted. The expression like *'Too...fashion and foreign thing'* (line 9) conveys the sense of imitating foreign ways by the Indians.

Finally, the expression *'I should say even 200% correct'* (line 7) is the example of exaggeration in the poem.

2.2. At the Level of the Symbols in Art (L_2)

At this level, the functions of each and every style feature identified and isolated at the level of the sentence symbols are studied.

The phonological level of this poem involves no significant rhymes, so the poem is in 'free verse'. Further, there is internal rhyme in the poem in the form of alliteration, assonance, and consonance which help in providing an element of music to the poem.

The lexical level, too, depicts some significant style features of the poem. First, the present progressive tense marker/-ing/, and repetition of some words provides rhyme as well as musicality to the poem.

The 'action verbs' reveal politically an aggressive perspective of the speaker and the few stative verbs reveal the strong likes and dislikes in his behavior
The use of Indian lexicon like '*lassi', 'Ram Rajya', 'Indirabehn', 'Hindiwallas'* etc. signifies an Indian ethos of which the speaker is a part.
'Reduplication' provides an emphasis as well as Indianness to the scene. It may be mentioned that the reduplication is a common feature among Indian languages.
The syntactic level in this poem is more dominating for it reveals some more significant variations. The use of style feature such as 'monologue' indicates that the poem is in the form of communication between the speaker and the hearer, where the speaker does all the talking. This marks him out as an assertive person.
The /-ing/features performing different grammatical functions indicate the style of the speaker which is like the English spoken by the majority of 'lower middle class' people in India.
Further, the deviant use of the progressive aspect marker, the articles, and the preposition, and even an adverb, signifies that the speaker uses the language over which he does not have full command signifying thereby an irony of usage.
Further, the non -inversion of auxiliary in the yes/no questions is the style of the speaker where the rule of the language has not been acquired. This also signifies ironic usage. Similarly the deviance in the tag question also represents irony of usage.
Coordination of nouns also reveals more uses of commonly collocated expressions in Indian English. Similar features can be seen in noun phrase constructions which result from the reduction of a sentence or clause into a noun phrase in expressions like *'student unrest fellow '* (line 15).
The features at the Semantic level, too, provide significances. The use of monologue reveals the desire of the Patriot to be a good speaker. The use of intertexuality at the semantic level signifies faulty learning, and the improper quotation serves an ironic function to create humour. The metaphoric expressions identified at this semantic level, are also conventional. Hence they reveal a very ordinary person. However, it may be added that syntactic repetition as in lines (10-11) functions to add an element of musicality to the poem.

2.3. At the Level of the Art Symbol (L_3a)

At this level, all the individual symbols interconnect with each other to form the text as a semiotic whole. This level primarily provides the signification of the whole poem.
At the phonological level, the poem reveals that the poem has *'prose rhythm'*, and it is in '*free verse'*. The lexicon and syntax through repetitions add to the poetic rhythm. An element of alliteration, consonance and assonance provides focus in music.
The various deviant features of syntax show the speech style of the speaker. Incidentally these are the features that one finds in the use of the language by a large number of *lower middle class* people. These are the features of 'Indian English'. However, the use of Indian English performs an ironic function which is the opposite of the intended seriousness by the speaker. The semantics too provides an element of irony.
It is evident from the above discussion of the poem at the level of the Sentence Symbol, Symbols in Art and the Art Symbol that the Patriot is a semiliterate person. He is a patriot whose use of language is ironic. While he speaks his language undermines his seriousness. The element of prosaicness also diminishes the stature of the Patriot. He appears to have taken for granted the greatness of Mahatma Gandhi, the ancient Indian wisdom, and Indirabehn. Being a teetotaler he drinks '*lassi'* and as a Gandhian he wishes to show himself on the side of 'peace and non-violence'. He believes in the oncoming of '*Ram Rajyas*'. Apart from the things mentioned, other things, particularly western are abhoring to him. He wishes to give the impression of a perceptive Patriot, but his use of language

betrays him and presents him as a caricature.Therefore, the title '*The Patriot*' is quite ironical in the poem.

3. Conclusion

In this paper an attempt has been made to briefly delineate the theory of stylistic analysis from the perspective of semiolinguistic which can be used for the analysis of any poetry. This theory was applied to Nissim Ezekiel's poem 'The Patriot '. The analysis shows that the contextual relationship between structure and function can help us in studying the poem as an Art Symbol. Such an analysis gains in significance since it attempts to study the aesthetic function within the larger domain of language functions.

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