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Stylistic Study of *Purple Hibiscus*

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Abstract

This paper did a linguistic-stylistic study of the novel with emphasis on determining how the author manipulated language to create aesthetic patterns and values. Using the notion projection method in selecting data from the texts, a linguistic model like the Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) was applied in the analysis of certain aspects of identified literary language. The TGG features were used to describe foregrounding, hypotactic, paratactic, code-mixing and code switching rhetorical patterns and fragmentary structures. This not only showed the inter-relationship among literature, languages, linguistics and stylistics but revealed the literary artists (un)conscious ability to manipulate language.

Introduction

Until the 1960s, when linguistic analysis of literary texts became popular, the study of such texts was primarily approached from the point of view of literature. In this instance, such issues as the theme, subject matter, plot, characterization and diction

were the underlying basis upon which a text was examined or criticized. While noting that stylistics goes beyond linguistics because of its evaluation of quality, Oha (2003) has argued that linguistics only describes whereas stylistics describes and evaluates (p82). This, therefore, informs the choice of the stylistic approach to the study of Chimamanda Achiche's *Purple Hibiscus*. This is to determine the stylistic effects. In order to achieve this, the Transformational Generative Grammar Model is chosen as the framework for the sentence evaluation.

It is important to stress that stylistic analysis in linguistics, also called linguistic stylistics, refers to the identification of patterns of usage in speech and writing this paper therefore is to identify their distinct stylistics application and resultant effects.

Purple Hibiscus is the primary source for the data. However, the random sampling method is used. What has informed this method is the fact that not all the sentences in the texts can be selected and analyzed.

Theoretical Framework

There is a raging argument among literary and linguistic scholars as to which of the fields stylistics belongs. However, the term, “stylistics” is employed in a variety of senses by different linguists. The Encyclopedia Britannica, 2001, notes that

In its in-depth interpretation, it (stylistics) is understood to deal with every kind of synchronic variation in language other than what can be ascribed to differences of regional dialect. At its narrowed interpretation it refers to the linguistic analysis of literary texts.

While our approach is to do a linguistic analysis of literary texts, it is obvious that one of the aims of stylistics is to identify those features of a text that give it its individual stamp and mark it as the work of a particular author. Another aim is to identify the linguistic features of the text that produce a certain aesthetic response in the reader.

Stylistics is studied from the view point of linguistics, the scientific study of language. In this regard, the argument canvassed in this paper and the data used for analysis are empirically recoverable as in linguistics. Furthermore, it is in consonance with the view of Arthur Schopenhauer as reported in the Encyclopaedia under reference, that “an experienced writer is able to rely on the power of his habitual choices of sounds words and syntactic patterns to convey his personality that Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG), with occasional insight into the notions of deep and surface structures, is chosen as the theoretical framework.

Language of Literature and Stylistic Analysis

The inter-relationship between literature and language can be captured in the fact that literary artists/creative writers no doubt use and manipulate language to create effects in their works. The link between literature and language is captured by Ekpa (1994) who has noted that:

Through language, the creative writer sews together the scattered imagination within the matrix of his thoughts and from it ... produces a message that live as in the consciousnesses of all readers even after the death of the water (p.42)

Though it is known that literature uses language in different forms to achieve this, the sentence forms the foundation on which such achievement is realized. The manipulation of the sentence structure and taking it away from the everyday normal sense of usage is not only the hallmark of literature but describes the style of the writer language is basic to human communication. It is however code-governed by a set of rules for generating well-formed sentences. Despite this, Leech (1969), observed that:

The creative water... enjoys a unique freedom amongst users of the language, to range over all its communication resources, without respect to the social or historical contexts to which they belong (p.5).

By this, it is clear that creative writers draw effectively from the resources of language. Yankson (1987), has prescribed certain parameters/features for the analysis of the language of literature. Stylistics is the study of devices in language (such as rhetorical figure and syntactic pattern) that are considered to produce expressive or literary style. It is the study of varieties of language whose properties position that language in content. It attempts to establish principles capable of explaining the particular choices made by individuals and social groups in their use of language. This, by implication, means that stylistics relates to the study of style used in literary language and the effect the writer/speaker wishes to communicate to the reader/hearer.

Bio-Data of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Chimamanda Adichie was born in 1977. She grew up in the university town of Nsukka. She studied communication and Political science. A serious budding writer who has attracted global attention, Adichie has won many laurels and awards. Her outstanding works are *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006).

Synopsis of the Novel

Purple Hibiscus is centred on family violence which observes to be a sensitive and touching story of a child exposed so early to religious intolerance and the gullies side of the Nigerian State. However, family violence and religious intolerance cannot

be said to be the only themes of the novel as it dwells on political intolerance and military adventurism into Nigerian politics, cultural and class conflicts, societal decadence including low standard of education occasioned by incessant industrial crises in the education sector.

Set in the eastern part of Nigeria dominated by the Igbo ethnic group, the novel is simply the story of a family whose household are gagged and not given the freedom for self-assertion by its head, Eugene. Eugene's high handedness and vicious manner ruin the joy of the entire family. However, Eugene's flaw, like any other tragic hero, leads to his untimely and disastrous death as he is poisoned by his own wife who can no longer bear the treatment he meters out on her and the children. It is also the chilling story of a family caught in the dilemma of balancing civilization, religion and culture with pretentious personal and conservative beliefs. Through this, the predicament faced by affluent families even in the midst of abundant wealth is depicted. In describing this irony, the writer shows how Eugene's children Kambili and Jaja, find happiness in Auntie Ifeoma's house in spite of her low financial status. In achieving this feat, Adichie uses various literary and linguistic devices to capture the themes highlighted.

Hypotactic and Paratactic Structures in *Purple Hibiscus*

Both hypotactic and paratactic terms are used to describe two different structures that deal with the management (analysis) of clauses in sentences. While hypotaxis is a style concerned with nesting of relative clauses or syntactic subordination of one clause to another to create complex sentences, parataxis is a style that coordinates independent clauses to create a compound sentence. K.G. Wilson in the *Columbia Guide to Standard American English* observes that Parataxis is a rhetorical and syntactic arrangement in which clauses are strung together in series without subordination".

It is evident from this, therefore, that parataxis juxtaposes. However Garber (2000) writes that while hypotaxis is associated with grammatical complexity (as in reading, parataxis is associated with lexical complexity (oral speech). But the view of C.S. Bartholomew (2002) is important to the effect that both hypotaxis and parataxis are capable of accomplishing the same semantic pragmatic function. In *Purple Hibiscus*, for instance, there is a stringing together of both parataxis and hypotaxis for example;

Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the étagère (p. 3).

This excerpt depicts a multiple complex sentence by possessing only one subordinate clause (When my brother Jaja did not go to communion) and three main clauses containing three finite verbs. These main clauses are:

- a. Things started to fall apart at home
- b. (and) Papa flung his heavy missal across the room
- c. and (Papa) broke the figurines on the étagère

While the three finite verbs are *started*, *flung* and *broke*, a closer observation of these shows the sentence pattern as one that combines hypotaxis and parataxis because of the utilization of subordination “when” and coordination “and”. This form of sentence is also made possible by the transformational rules. Importantly however, the main issue here is not the presence of one adverb clause in a midst of three or so independent clauses, but the clear dominance of the paratactic form and the stylistic implications.

Unlike the initial excerpt used for the earlier illustration, the following passage is made up of complex sentences with varying degrees of subordination.

- a. They had just started to pray over the food when I heard Jaja bound up the stairs.
- b. I knew he would come into my room first because Papa was not home
- c. If Papa was home, Jaja would go into his own room first to change (p.22).

While sentence (a) reflects as adverbial clause of time (when I heard Jaja bound up the stairs) modifying the verb “started” in the main clause, there is also adverbial clause of reason (because Papa was not home) in sentence (b), modifying the verb “knew” in the main clause. In sentence (c), the adverbial clause of condition (if Papa was home) qualifies the verb “would go”. Though there is no nesting of clauses in a single long sentence vis-a- vis subordination in this instance, the use of hypotaxis in each cannot however be ignored. However, an exact use of hypotaxis as a nesting (stringing) of subordinate clauses is found in the following excerpt.

When her fiancé learned of yet another university clause, he had told her he could no longer wait until she graduated since nobody knew when the university would open (p.234).

Such sign posts as *when*, *until*, *since* in this excerpt indicate subordinate clauses nested together. While the main clause is “He had told her”, “he could no longer wait” is a noun clause, objection of the pronoun “Her.” The subordinate clauses are:

- i. When her finance learned of yet another university clause
- ii. Until she graduated

- iii. Since nobody knew
- iv. When the university would open

All of these adverbial clauses of time are tied to the main verb “had told in the main clause. There is no doubt that this passage reminds one of the far reaching implication of the incessant industrial unrest that has characterized the Nigerian academic calendar.

We have noted that the dominant sentence pattern by Adichie is the use of hypotactic structure resulting from sentence coordination and subordination. It is however the characteristics of English sentences to be recursive and Adichie has used this for stylistic effect. Let us consider the following example (*I knew he would come into my room first because Papa was not home*) involving the use of adverbial clause and a relative construction in which the embedded sentence is a noun clause.

The tree diagram (See Appendix) reveals the internal structure of the sentence. In this Phrase-marker, the first subordinate clause (noun clause) is embedded under the VP as direct object of the verb, *knew* while the adverbial clause is embedded under the S in the first subordinate clause.

The ‘S’ (s-bar) contains a COMP (that) which is deleted on the surface string. It introduces and links the subordinate clause to the main clause. Within the embedded clause is another clause which is left under the category S(sentence) and analysed like any other sentence. The effect of this nesting is that it captures the inner most thought of the narrator. It is also symbolic of the child language as represented by the story teller.

Foregrounding

There is the usage of foregrounding in *Purple Hibiscus*. Foregrounding is the manipulation of linguistic entities to attract readers’ attention. It is this manipulation that creates style in the novel. By such manipulation words, phrases, and sentences are given prominence or made, made more meaningfully significant by the language user (Harris, 2003).

In three different instances, Kambili, the storyteller, uses simile, (and foregrounding) to draw attention to the situation she is describing. For instance, the following is her description of her mother:

I watched Mama walk towards the Kitchen, in her lumping gait. Her braided her was piled into a net that tapered to a golf-ball-like lump at the end, like a Father Christmas hat. She looked tired (p.62).

Apart from creating a mental image of the mother, limping, she uses simile to make comparisons that draws the reader's attention to the imaginary sight of her limping mother. This is also the same in the following examples;

- a. It was the same way I felt when he smiled, his face breaking open like a coconut with the brilliant white meat inside (p.25).
- b. You are like a fly blindly following a corpse

In (a), the author uses image and comparison as well as the device of selectional restriction rule (like a coconut with the brilliant white meat inside) to draw attention. It is clear that the part of the coconut that is white cannot be said to be a piece of meat and no meat, as a matter of fact is white in colour.

Furthermore, notice also the foregrounded collocation of "brilliant" with "meat" in the text. In (b), the statement, Eugene is compared with a fly, and this prophetically later becomes his albatross. In another instance, the author writes:

In later weeks, when Kevin drove past Ogui Road, there were soldiers at the road block near the market, walking around, caressing their long guns (p.27)

The use of "caressing" instead of "carrying" depicts the use of selection restriction rule brings about the image of lovers in romantic/erotic engagements. However, it shows the importance the soldiers attach to their guns, especially their love of, and emotional attachment to, this lethal possession of theirs. These forms of foregrounding where figures of speech or words are given prominence by the writer to earn attention are different from the following example in which pattern repetition is used as a form of foregrounding:

I needed him to hug me close and say that from whom much is given much is also expected. I needed him to smile at me, in that way that lit up his face that warned something inside me. But I had come second. I was stained by failure (p.39).

In describing her father's attitude towards her each time she comes home upon the release of her school result, she uses pattern repetition (I needed him ... and that) to build up anxiety, the anti-climax of which is the revelation of her second position. She also uses such sentence patterns that are lamentative (But I had second. I was stained by failure) The last sentence is metaphorical in the sense that "failure" is foregrounded here to act as a human being that has consciously/intentionally stained another's cloth. These extended meanings confirm the place of deep and surface structures in the analysis of literary texts.

Foregrounding can be achieved through the use of sound patterns and intonation, this example is very apt:

His name was Haruna, he had told Jaja and me... that our pather was the best Bigman... the best emfloyer. Did we know our pather had helfed his wipe get the messenger job at the local government Opppice? (p.103)

The writer uses the speaker's nasality to effectively realize the English consonantal sounds /p/ and /f/ bilabial and fricative sounds respectively to create foregrounding. This accounts for the pronunciation of *father*, *employer*, *paid*, *helped*, wife and office as pather, employe, faid, pees, helfed, wipe and opppice respectively. This also reflects the Hausa variety of English in terms of the socio-linguistic analysis of the English language situation in Nigeria. The hallmark of this English, among others, is the substitution of the plosive sound /p/ for the fricative /f/ and vice versa. In a sense, this stylistic device also yields humour as a by-product for the Nigerian reader familiar with this regional accent.

Code-Mixing & Code-Switching as Sentence Patterns in *Purple Hibiscus*

A code, in linguistic sense, may be a language or a variety or style of a language. Code-mixing and code switching, which are socio-linguistic terms in which two languages are combined in a speech, also occur in the speech of all bilinguals. Code-mixing emphasis hybridization, while code-switching deals with movement from one language to another. In illustrating this with Igbo language code-mixing occurs in such expressions as: **There** is no "mmekwatarism" if you make any mistakes meanings that "There is no remedy, if you make any **mistakes**". But code-switching is captured thus: I can't go to the stream now because Ike gwuru m" meaning "I can't **go to the stream** now because I am tired."

Examples of this nature account for the reason why code-switching is also alternation between two or more languages, dialects or language registers. Basic reasons for code-switching have been adduced to social motivations, setting /topic of the discussion and the lexical need of the conversationalists Alignment of the syntax of the two operational languages is paramount to code-switching. In other words, code-switching and code-mixing are not done haphazardly. The website, (<http://www.code mixing and codes witching html>), identifies four major types of switching namely tag switching (switch in which tags and certain set phrases (or words) in one language are inserted into an utterance in another); intra-sentential switching occurs within a clause or sentence boundary; inter-sentential switching (a switching in which a change of language occurs at a clause or sentence boundary where each clause or sentence is in one language or the other), and intra-word switching (a type of switching in which a change occurs within a word boundary).

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie utilizes these to captivate attention. Examples of these switches are:

1. It was Uncle Eugene who did that to you, Okwia? She asked (p.220).
2. Do you not hear what I have said gbo? Auntie Ifeoma said, raising her voice (p.214).
3. Kambili, Ke Kwanu? (p.202).
4. Papa-Nnukwu really worried about having a proper funeral (p.203).
5. From the Kitchen, the spices in Amaka's Ofensals tickled my nose (p.154).
6. When she held my hand and said, "kee Ka Ime? I was stumed (p.215)

The underlined are Igbo words or phrases which depict meanings found only in the Igbo language and culture. The first two sentence patterns are examples of tag switching. Other instances of switching are ubiquitous in the novel. Beyond this, the writer, through sentence variability, in the novel, identifies with Igbo English- a variety of the Nigerian English.

Igboanusi, (2002) has observed that:

Although the Igbo writes in English, his environment and sources of creativity are entirely Igbo. Igbo elements and speech habits are easily observed in the Igbo-novel ... Through the linguistic processes of transfer and translation, the following seven linguistic categories – loanwords, coinages loan blends, translation equivalents, semantic extension, coloration extension and colloquialisms – have been identified as the sources of Igbo English in the novel, (p.115).

This deliberate stylistic device, according to Igboanusi (2002) is a reflection of the linguistic resources appropriate to the Igbo and the Nigerian cultural and sociolinguistic situation which also enables the writer to express and translate his/her local experiences into English (p. 117).

Interrogative/Rhetorical Patterns

Adichie uses the interrogative sentence patterns which, as noted in the transformation rules account for movement of elements. The writer uses this style to realize certain themes in the novel. Showing the negative impact of military rulership on the education sector in Nigeria at a certain time, Auntie Ifeoma asks: "When do we speak out, eh? When soldiers are appointed lecturers and students attend lectures with guns to their heads? When do we speak out?" (p.223).

While these questions are penetrating, there is also foregrounding with the repetition of "when do we speak out?" Rhetorical patterns are good examples of

foregrounding because they draw the attention of the reader similarly, the rampaging students protesting the non-availability of basic infrastructure at their institution use the rhetorical questions: “Where is running water? Where is light? Where is petrol?” (p.228).

To build anxiety, this form of speech arrests attention, charges the listener to action, and is hence, a fitting mobilisational sequence of phrases for mob action. Also, Kambili builds suspense through posers when the mother suddenly appears in Nsukka from Enugu without prior notice.

I whipped around Mama was climbing out of a yellow unsteady – looking taxi what was she doing here? What had happened? Why was she wearing her rubber slippers all the way from Enugu?... Mama, Ogini? Did something happen? (p. 242).

Generally speaking, the rhetorical questions posed by Kambili enable her to anticipate fear and concern for the mother. True to her fears, the mother had lost her pregnancy due to the father’s (Kambili father) violent attack on her. This is confirmed when the mother tells her;

You know that small table where we keep the family Bible, me? Your father broke it on my belly... My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St. Agnes. My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it.

There is a foregrounding of imagery in this passage stemming from the action of the fight and the subsequent spread of blood on the floor. There is also a semantic effect of shared knowledge which presupposes that Kambili and her mother know about the latter’s pregnancy. A confirmation to this is given in the last sentence of the mother in which she discloses the doctors’ helplessness “to save it”

Adichie has utilized the features of the language of literature to leave a stamps of authority on her work as that of a literary art. Also, the use of code-mixing, code-switching, hypotaxis, parataxis, foregrounding and rhetorical patterns evidently mark and the text.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the distinctive features that mark individuality in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*. This is more so when style is looked at from the viewpoint of Crystal and Davy (1969) to the effect that it (style) is as individual’s marker or some or all of the language habits of one person or a selection of language habits, the occasional linguistic idiosyncrasies which characterize an individual’s unique expression (p.10). Adiche uses hypotaxis (subordination/nesting of clauses) specifically and in other instances, interrogative patterns and well developed dialogues

which depict normal speech situations to drive home the intended points. Through the conversations of the characters, using various forms of expression, the themes are developed. Thus, we have seen how Adichie manipulated language to create special stylistic effects.

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APPENDIX

