

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 3

EXAMPLES OF LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTIONS AND FEATURES

3.1 BACKGROUND

This chapter takes a closer look at examples of linguistic descriptions and features. The explanation or interpretation of the examples aims to elucidate its relevance to stylistics. This chapter deals with questions that lie beyond the dictionary. That is, questions that cannot be solved mainly by explaining the surface meaning. What lies behind the words will be delved into and explored-- tone, implications, metaphor, imagery, deviations, etc.-- all those features of language which need to be interpreted.

3.2 DEVIATION AND FOREGROUNDING

Deviation is one of the most fundamental concepts in stylistics analysis. Deviation has an important psychological effect on readers (and listeners). This psychological effect which affects the reader's interpretation of a literary text through a linguistic deviation is called foregrounding . There are many ways that a linguistic deviation can occur. It can occur through inversion, repetition, parallelism, etc.

3.3 INVERSION

A deviation via inversion occurs when word order is deviant, that is, a reversal of the normal word order (Duff,1989:54). An example to illustrate an inversion is:

To Mrs. Musa, therefore, the doctor turned.

It would normally appear as:

The doctor therefore turned to Mrs. Musa.

Another example that can further illustrate an inversion is:

Where they had come from it was impossible to guess.

It would normally appear as:

It was impossible to guess where they had come from.

3.4 REPETITION

Another method of foregrounding is repetition. The underlying questions here are: Why did the writer use the very same words or different words that have the same meaning? To illustrate repetition using the very same words is the following example:

Blow, blow, thou winter wind.

The repetition of 'blow' would be interpreted as the wind having a greater and more prolonged force than usual thereby spreading the icy cold air or breeze.

Another example to illustrate repetition using different words that have the same meaning (synonyms) is:

The judge says that he has been compelled to come to a particular conclusion but his colleagues say they have been forced to come to a different conclusion.

Here, the words “compelled” and “forced” are used with having the same thought but expressed in different words.

Another example to illustrate repetition of the same word, though not necessarily in the same form is:

Eyes can be impaired by a number of diseases and the impairment can be the symptom of diseases in some other parts of the body.

Here, the root word “impair” is used with suffixes –ed in impaired and –ment in impairment.

3.5 PARALLELISM

The aim in parallelism is to make readers more aware or conscious of the link between language and context (Short,1996:14). Passages are visioned as being divided into two parts, suggesting a context for the language and predicting the content of the other half. An example to illustrate parallelism is:

*But he was wounded for our transgressions;
he was bruised for our iniquities.*

“Wounded” and “bruised” are intended to be viewed as equivalent in some way, as are “transgressions” and “iniquities”. This leads one to a more general interpretation of the two clauses, where “wounding and bruising” and “transgressions and iniquities”

are linked. There is parallelism because there is similarity in meaning in the two pairs of words involved.

Another example to illustrate parallelism is:

*Not only did the bus arrive, but also it got in only
about an hour late.*

It seems that there is an important distinction that is intended to be pointed out here with the use “arrive and “got in” as perhaps between words like massacre and murder (Duff,1989:57). One word having a more intended meaning or tells more of a tale than the other word.

3.6 SIMILE

A simile is a figure of speech or literary device that is created when two unlike things are compared with the use of “like” or “as”(Perrine,1983:560). An example of a simile is:

A pretty girl is like a melody.

The comparison of “a pretty girl” and “a melody” is put forth. It can be interpreted as the girl having a lyrical personality, is in tune with life, is lively, etc. Another example of a simile is:

Her skin is as smooth as silk.

The comparison of “skin” and “silk” is put forth. It can be interpreted as a female having skin that is unblemished, soft, radiant, cool, etc as silk.

3.7 METAPHOR

A metaphor is created when two unlike things are compared without the use of “like” or “as” (Perrine,1983:568). The metaphor shows in what way the two things are similar. In simpler terms, a metaphor can also be defined as something other than what it is. An example to illustrate a metaphor is:

My wife is a rose.

“A rose” means the lady in the above sentence resembles a rose in certain ways, perhaps her beauty, sweetness, bright, fresh appearance, etc. Another added information one can get out this sentence is that a husband (man) is making a statement about his wife (the lady).

3.8 SYMBOL

A symbol is a sign or object accepted as recalling, typifying or representing a thing, quality or idea. In simpler terms, a symbol is created when something means more than what it is. An example to illustrate a symbol is:

*She saw the light of dawn and knew that there was still
hope.*

In the above sentence, “the light of dawn” is what she really saw and the same “light of dawn” also signifies hope.

3.9 ARTICLES

Articles are used in various and different situations in English language. The use of a, an, the and of one in English language is of importance because learners are usually not sure or hesitant about their proper use (Duff,1989:60). When an article occurs, our natural reaction is whether it is needed or not and whether the right one is used. The use of definite article --the-- can be illustrated by the following example:

the sky

The sky looks very gloomy today.

The use of indefinite article --a-- can be illustrated by the following example:

a chair

Omar needs to stand on a chair to reach the door knob.

The use of a generic article is illustrated when no article or other kind of determiner is before it. An example to illustrate a generic or zero article is:

over lunch

We discussed the concert over lunch in Singapore.

Another example to illustrate the use of a zero article is:

A list of provisions

I made a list of provisions that I had intended to buy for my trip to Pulau Langkawi.

An example to illustrate the use of one as a substitute article is:

"I cannot sell you a badge today." said the man.

“When can I buy one from you?” I asked.

“I can sell you one on Tuesday.” replied the man.

The use of one as a substitute for the badge is therefore understood by both the above speakers.

3.10 TENSE

Present tense can be used to refer to specific situations. An example to illustrate the present tense is:

Those daffodils are dying.

Another example to illustrate the present tense to refer to a specific situation is:

My leg is hurting.

Present tense can also be used to refer to timeless, universal matters (Short,1996:23). An example to illustrate the present tense that is timeless and universal is:

Daffodils are yellow.

Another example to illustrate the present tense that is timeless and universal is:

Humans need water to live.

3.11 PRONOUNS

The two types of pronouns that are commonly found in a piece of text are exophoric and anaphoric pronouns (Short,1996:24). Exophoric pronouns refer to the

items in the immediate situational context of the speaker. An example to illustrate an exophora is:

all

He is leaving town due to all that has happened.

The other pronoun is an anaphoric pronoun which refer back to some previous linguistic item already mentioned in a text. An example to illustrate an anaphoric pronoun is:

it

We climbed the mountain. It was high.

3.12 STYLE VARIATION

Style variation deals with several items that can be detected in a piece of text. The items are dialect, medium, tenor and domain (Short,1996:80). Examples of dialect are regional dialects, class dialects, men's vs women's language, adult vs child language.

The medium of the language tells whether it is written or spoken language. In a literary text, the medium is usually written language. However, there can be representations of spoken language in a written text.

The tenor tells whether the language used is formal or informal, accessible vs inaccessible language. Many specialist vocabularies for example, the terminology of science, linguistics or the law, will be inaccessible language to the ordinary reader. However, there are "common core" words for example, table, chair or house that can be accessible language to almost all ordinary readers.

The domain states whether the language used is felt to be the language of advertising, legal language, the language of instruction and the language of science, etc.

3.13 ALLITERATION

Alliteration occurs when there is repetition of the same or similar consonants (Short, 1996:107). An example to illustrate an alliteration is:

A dreadful winter passed, each day severe

Misty when mild, but cold when clear

/m/ alliteration is detected in the first half of the second line which binds the concepts of mistiness and mildness. /c/ alliteration is detected in the second half of the second line which binds the concepts of cold and clear.

3.14 ASSONANCE

Assonance is the term traditionally reserved for patterns of repetition of vowel sounds (Short, 1996:111). Assonance, like alliteration, connects important words together and helps the reader notice meaning connections between them. An example to illustrate assonance is:

I, like you wither'd leaf, remain behind,

Nipped by the frost, and shivering in the wind.

The words “wither’d”, “nipped” and “shivering” are connected by assonance. Both the speaker (I) and the wither’d leaf have been affected by the frost (withered, nipped) and as a result, both appear to be shivering.

3.15 PHONOASTHEMES

Phonemes are the sound units in language. Morphemes are the smallest linguistic units which actually possess meaning. In between phonemic and morphemic status are phonoasthemes (Short,1996:119). Phonoasthemes are building blocks but the combination of the sounds seems to bear a meaning in the way a morpheme does.

gleam, glitter, glister, glare, glint, glance

All the above words have to do with light and sight. All the above words also begin with gl. These gl words are an example of a phonoaesthetic series.

3.16 RHYME

Rhyme occurs when there is similarity in the sounding of the last syllable of two or more words. An example to illustrate rhyme is:

Five and alive

“Five” rhymes with “alive”. The looser connections are usually called half-rhymes (Short,1996:113). An example to illustrate a half-rhyme is:

Five and fife

“Five” is a half-rhyme to “fife”. Internal rhyme occurs when rhymes are in positions other than at the end of a line. An example to illustrate an internal rhyme is:

In its listlessness, the wind blows,

You, being in solitude with restlessness.

“Listlessness” and “restlessness” provide internal rhyme.

3.17 ONOMATOPOEIA

Onomatopoeia is the sound, which make up a word that mimics the sound the word refers to (Short,1996:115). In other words, there is a special relationship between meaning and sound. An example to illustrate onomatopoeia is:

Miaow and bow-wow

The word “Miaow” resembles to some degree the sound that a cat or kitten makes and “bow-wow” resembles the sound that a dog makes.

3.18 PASSIVE FORMS

Passive forms in English language require extended thought and thus the activity involving passive constructions should be done in writing (Duff,1989:78). Passive forms and passive construction are so much a part of the English language that they will occur naturally in all kinds of language domain from legal language to the language of science. An example to illustrate passive construction is:

Letters to the editor are welcomed. But not all can be entertained.

The context should be identified as precisely as possible.

3.19 IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

Idioms or phrasal verbs, proverbs and popular sayings (collectively known as idiomatic expressions) are difficult to translate or interpret. English is full of these idiomatic expressions. The meaning of these idiomatic expressions can be normally conveyed in other words but it is not done with equal brevity and force. It is this

idiomatic part of the English language that is one of the most difficult aspects for a learner to master. An idiomatic expression may seem irrational or illogical, but it cannot be altered at will. Every learner needs to grasp the meaning of every idiomatic expression introduced, be able to use each expression correctly and naturally and should be able to supplement more associative words and phrases to supplement the vocabulary stock. If a suitable idiom does not readily spring to mind in the learner's first language, the teacher needs to give a straightforward interpretation or explanation. An example to illustrate an idiomatic expression is:

Teething problems

The above is explained to be the initial problems or difficulties. To illustrate the use of the above idiomatic expression is:

The project ran well after it solved its teething problems.

Another example to illustrate an idiomatic expression is:

To keep one's eyes peeled

The meaning of the above idiomatic expression is to be watchful. To illustrate the use of the above idiomatic expression is:

Whenever I saw a suspicious-looking person,

I kept my eyes peeled.

Another example to illustrate an idiomatic expression is:

To be under the weather

The meaning of the above idiomatic expression is to be unwell. To illustrate the use of the above idiomatic expression is:

Mr. Adil was on medical leave because

he was under the weather.

Another example to illustrate an idiomatic expression is:

More or less

The meaning of the above idiomatic expression is approximately. To illustrate the use of the above idiomatic expression is:

*I need more or less three years to
complete the whole project.*

3.20 SUMMARY

Some examples of linguistic descriptions and features are illustrated to facilitate explanations and interpretations. These guidelines help to develop tactics for learners to deal with language features which consequently are necessary for application in stylistic analysis.

To further demonstrate the above point, two sets of exemplary surah from two versions of the English language translations of the meaning of the Quran are presented for a stylistic analysis in the next two chapters.