Research Article

LINGUISTIC FOREGROUNDING IN "LONDON" BY WILLIAM BLAKE: A STYLISTIC STUDY

[1]Khalil A.A. Abdulqader, and [2]Abdulqawi Hamood Alyasery

[1]Department of Linguistics, A.M.U, Aligarh, 202002, India
[2]Department of English, A.M.U. Aligarh, 202002, India

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	In this article, stylistic techniques and methods are used for the stylistic study. Linguistic foregrounding is considered as one important concept of stylistics. It focuses more on the linguistic parallelisms, deviations, repetitions and figures of speech given and fore grounded in a literary work. This stylistic study is made under the different linguistic levels: graphology, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. The study would be helpful in understanding the basic concept of the poem "London" and to analyze the structure, style and foregrounding in the whole poem. In this poem, William Blake is principally describing a very corrupted society dominated by the power of materialism and the contrasts between the upper and working class sections of society.

INTRODUCTION

Stylistics is a branch of linguistics that defines different styles and variations in a language. Widdowson (1975) defines stylistics as the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation, style has different meanings for different people. Widdowson and Crystal (1985) emphasize the division of the word 'stylistics' into two parts: (Style +-stics) whereas style means the way of writing literature and -stics means the scientific study. So stylistics is the scientific study of style.

Different scholars define stylistics in different ways. According to Short and Candlin (1989) that stylistics is a linguistic approach to the study of the literary texts. Leech 1969 observes that style is the way in which something is spoken, written or performed. It refers to use of sounds, words, sentences, structures, utterances, figures of speech. Generally speaking and broadly, style provides the foundation to the personality of the person. Moreover, style reflects the thoughts of the person's mind. Stylistics is the study of the linguistic devices and foregroundings in languages such as rhetorical terms, linguistic deviations, parallelisms, repetitions, figures of speech at the different linguistic levels.

Stylistics uses a term 'foregrounding' to indicate the violation from a linguistic or socially acknowledged norms. It can be compared to a situation when one looks at a picture against its background. Gravin 1964 translated aktualisace and coined the term foregrounding. It is an attention-calling device in the literary passage through the use of repetition, parallels,

deviance, register, figures of speech, emphasis, unexpected lexical collocations, syntactic inversions, etc. The notion of foregrounding is a term borrowed from the Prague School of linguistics used by Leech and Short 1981 to refer to artistically motivated deviation.

The language of poetry differs considerably from the ordinary language because in ordinary language there is no violation of the norms, whereas in poetic language there is the systematic violation of the linguistic norms. Foregrounding makes possible the poetic utilization of language. In other words, the poetic utilization of language is not possible without foregrounding. According to Mukarovsky 1932,"without possibility of foregrounding, there would be no poetry". To him the language of poetry must be foregrounded, deautomatized and defamiliarized.

Introduction to the Poet

William Blake was an English poet, engraver, and painter. A boldly imaginative rebel in both his thought and his art, he combined poetic and pictorial genius to explore life. He was born in London, England, on November 28, 1757, the second son of a men's clothing merchant. Except for a few years in Sussex, England, his entire life was spent in London. From his earliest years he saw visions. He would see trees full of angels or similar sights. If these were not true mystical visions, they were the result of the artist's intense spiritual understanding of the world. From his early teens Blake wrote poems, often setting them to melodies of his own composition.

In August, 1782 Blake married Catherine Boucher, who had fallen in love with him at first sight. He taught her to read and

---

*Corresponding author: **Khalil A.A. Abdulqader**
Department of Linguistics, A.M.U, Aligarh, 202002, India

write, and she later became a valued assistant. His "sweet shadow of delight", as Blake called Catherine, was a devoted and loving wife. Blake produced songs of innocence in 1789 as the first major work in his new process, followed by songs of experience in 1794. The magnificent lyrics in these two collections carefully compare the openness of innocence with the bitterness of experience. They are a milestone because they are a rare instance of the successful union of two art forms by one man. In 1824 his health began to weaken, and he died singing in London, England, on August 12, 1827.

Introduction to the Poem

"London" is the most outstanding poem in the songs of experience. In this poem, William Blake utters his social criticism. It shows the miseries of the common people in London. Blake draws from his personal observations and gives a comprehensive picture of the many miseries, Physical and spiritual in the English capital London. He paints a picture of the dirty, miserable streets of London and describes the wretched people at the bottom of the society: the chimney-sweepers, soldiers, and harlots. The entire poem centers on the wails of these people from their pain and the injustices done to them, and exposes the gap between those in power and the misery of poor people. The poem is representative of English economic problems of the time, condemning many powerful institutions such as the church, royalty, the new industries, and the military. The main subject and the theme of this poem is man's lack of freedom and the causes of this lack. It is a relatively unique poem, in that it takes such a negative and critical view of London, when at the time the city represented the pinnacle of technology, and was considered the center of western culture and the British Empire. Overall, the poem has criticized society, the Church, Prostitution and even marriage.

Theoretical Background of Foregrounding

The term 'foregrounding' is borrowed by stylisticians from art criticism, which distinguishes between the foreground and the background of a painting. The theory of foregrounding is probably the most important theory within stylistic analysis, and foregrounding analysis is arguably the most important part of the stylistic analysis in poetry.

Jan Mukarovsky, one of the leading exponents of the Prague linguistic circle, was the first to postulate the concept of foregrounding in his famous article "standard language and poetic language", he (1970) states: " foregrounding is the opposite of automatization, that is the deautomatization of an act, the more an act is automatized the less consciously executed; the more it is foregrounded the more completely conscious does it become."

Linguistic foregrounding can occur at all language levels: phonology, morphology, lexis, syntax, pragmatics, graphology and semantics. It comes in different forms, and kinds, such as deviations, parallelisms, repetitions and figures of speech. It is generally used to highlight important parts of a text, to aid memorability and/or to invite interpretation.

Levels of Linguistic Foregrounding

Linguistic foregrounding can focus on three important principles, parallelism, deviations and repetitions. These important principles can be analyzed at the following linguistic levels respectively, phonology, graphology, lexical, morphology, syntax and semantics. All these levels contain different stylistic devices and techniques with reference to parallelism, deviations, and repetition. Below are the linguistic levels with their different stylistic techniques and figures of speech.

Phonological Level

Basically, this level discusses the study of sound patterns of a given language, rules of pronunciation, the rhyming scheme and utterance of the word in the sentence. Lodge (2009) states that phonology is the study of linguistic systems, specifically the way in which a sound represents differences of meaning in a language. Ofuya (2007) believes that phonology describes the ways in which speech sound are organized in English into a system. phonological stylistic devices are alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia, rhyme scheme, kinds of rhymes, poetic meter, enjambment, rhythm, etc.

Graphological Level

Leech (1969) observes that graphology exceeds orthography. It refers to the whole writing system, punctuation and paragraphing as well as spacing. Crystal and Davy (1969) state that graphology is the analogous study of a language writing system or orthography as seen in the various kinds of handwriting or topography. These are the formalized rules of writing, Alabi (2007) claimed that a graphological discussion of style among other features entails the foregrounding of quotation marks, ellipses, periods, hyphens, contracted forms, special structures, the full stop, the colon, the comma, the semicolon, the question mark, the dash, lower case letters, gothic and bold prints, capitalization, small print, spacing, italics etc". In broad sense, it deals with the systematic formation, structure and punctuation in the sentence.

Lexical and Morphological Levels

The level of lexicon here includes morphology as well, for it is basic to words formation. The important stylistic devices in these levels are repetition of the same lexical item, repetition of synonyms, repetition of the same word but with different grammatical function, antonyms, neologism coinages, word-blends, compound words, inflectional words, hyphenated words, derivational words, words from dead languages (archaism) etc.

Syntactic Level

Generally speaking, syntax studies the interrelationship between the elements comprising sentences structures and the rules governing the arrangement of sentences in sequences as well. Syntax, as a level of linguistics, serves a distinctive function. Its distinctiveness is high-lightened by the numerous possibilities of variation through which literary style finds its manifestation. Syntactic stylistic devices and features are parallelism (syntactic parallelism), syntactic deviations (inversions), repetition in all its kinds, Enumeration, polysendetion, chiasmus, ellipsis, etc.

Semantic Level

Semantics is the science of meanings dealing with the meaning system of language. It is the scientific study of the meaning of words, phrases, structures, and utterances. Besides, semantics is a very complicated and more abstract subject because it has much to do with logic, psychology and some other fields of science. Semantic features and semantic figures of speech are metaphor, simile, paradox, oxymoron, pun; irony,

personification, contrasts, connotations, juxtaposition, synonyms, antonyms, hyperbole, antithesis, symbolism, rhetorical questions, exclamation marks, etc.

Analysis of Linguistic Foregrounding of "London"

In this analysis, the levels of linguistic foregrounding will be discussed one by one focusing more on the important concepts of foregrounding: parallelism, deviations, and repetitions. The linguistic foregrounding of this poem "London" is going to be analysed below at the following levels of language: graphology, phonology, morphology and lexis, syntax and semantics.

Graphological Foregrounding

This kind of foregrounding is concerned with the writing system of the poem. It focuses on the spelling, capitalization, decapitalization, punctuations, dash, elision, enjambment, etc. This poem consists of four stanzas (quatrains) and each stanza has four lines. First of all, the graphological parallelism appears in the surface structure of the poem, i.e. it consists of four stanzas with four lines each. The graphological deviation happens via capitalization, (elision with contracted forms), missing punctuations, enjambment etc.

In the first stanza, Blake employs the use of elision and contracted forms in the words (thro') and (charter'd).The elision in the word (charter'd) appears twice, whereas the elision in the word (thro') appears only one time in this stanza . Each line in the first stanza begins with capital liters and the proper noun(Thames) begins also with the capital letter T. Blake employs the use of enjambment in this stanza, the process of running on lines occurs from the end of the second line into the fourth line. This shows that Blake wants to convey his message very quickly and emphasizes the aggression and injustice for people in London.

In the second stanza, Blake employs the use of capitalization for two important words (Man) and (Infants) whereas these two words begin with capital letters. He also uses the elision in the second word of compound word (the mind-forg'd). The running on lines or enjambment occurs from the last line in the second stanza into the second line of the third stanza. The enjambment here connects the two stanzas together. The capitalization, the elision and enjambment represent as graphological deviations in the poem. Graphological parallelism appears in the first three lines beginning with the prepositional phrase (in every) each.

In the third stanza, Blake shows some words beginning with capital letters as Soldiers and Palace. He foregrounds and emphasizes the importance of these two words in the poem. The elision occurs only one time in this stanza. It occurs in the word (Black' ning). The enjambment occurs from the third line of this stanza into the last line of the fourth stanza. Here, the enjambment connects the two stanzas together.

In the last stanza, Blake employs the capitalization for the beginning of the following words: Harlots, Infants, and the Marriage. He also uses the elision just one time in this stanza. It appears in the word (thro'). The enjambment here is still continuous from the previous stanza. This special stanza, the fourth stanza, appears without any punctuation marks, even the full stop at the end of the last line is neglected. The enjambment or running on lines occurs three times throughout the whole poem. This emphasizes that the poet wonders

through the streets of London and comments on his observations rapidly and continuously. He sees despair in the faces of the people he meets and hears fear and repression in their voices.

Phonological Foregrounding

Phonological foregrounding is one important type of linguistic foregrounding. It focuses more on the main elements of foregrounding such as phonological parallelism and phonological deviation. Many phonological stylistic devices are discussed under the phonological parallelism and deviations such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme scheme, internal rhyme, onomatopoeia, rhythm and meter.

Alliteration

It is the use of same sounds/consonants at the beginning of words that are close together. It was used systematically in old English poetry but in modern English poetry is generally used for a particular effect. Blake employs the alliteration in many places of the poem. Below are the alliterated sounds that occur in the poem one by one:

1. And **m**ark in every face I **m**eet   Line 3 /m/   **w**eakness, marks of **w**oe.   Line 4 /W/
2. The **m**ind-for'd **m**anacles I hear   Line 8 /m/
3. And the halpless **S**oldiers **s**igh   Line 11 /S/
4. But **m**ost thro' **m**idnight streets I hear   Line 13 /m/
a. **H**ow   the   youthful   **H**arlots   curse Line14 /h/
5. **B**lasts the new-**b**orn Infants tear   line 15 /b/

Assonance

It is the repetition of the same vowel sound in two words or more within a line of poetry. The assonance creates a rhythm to the poem. Blake employs the use of assonance in some lines such as:

1. wonder thro' **ea**ch charter'd str**ee**t   Line 1 /i:/
2. R**u**ns   in   bl**oo**d   down   palace   walls Line 12 /^/
3. And blights w**i**th plagues the Marr**i**age hearse Line 16 /I/

Consonance

It is a half rhyme in which final consonants are repeated but with different preceding vowels. Blake employs the use of consonance almost in many places such as:

1. Near where the charter'd Tham**es** do**es** flow. Line 2 /Z/
a. -Mark**s** of weakne**ss**, mark**s** of woe.   Line 4 /S/
2. And the haple**ss** soldier**s** sigh   Line 11   /S/, /z/
3. Bu**t**   mo**st**   thro'   midnigh**t**   stree**t**s   I   hear Line 13   /t/
a. -   How   the   youthful   Harlot**s**   cur**se** Line 14   /S/
b. -   Blas**ts**   the   new-born   infan**ts**   tear Line 15   /ts/

c. - And blight**s** with plaues the Marriage hear**se**
Line 16 /S/

Rhyme Scheme, Rhythm, and Meter

The poem has four quatrains, with alternate lines rhyming. This poem is famous for highly strong musical pattern. Generally speaking, the rhyme and rhythm are very definite and structured _ the rhyme is ABAB CDCD, EFEF, DGDG, and this poem is written with a metrical pattern of iambic tetrameter sporadically blended with trochaic tetrameter - which can help to accentuate the line with 7 syllables and the first word stressed. The changes are acquired by the special purposes, i.e. the emphasis of the meaning. The alteration of the stresses on the syllables in each line makes the poem sound like striking of the anvil, and also helps the poem to be more powerful. So one of the most striking characteristics of this poem is the anvil music. Repetition is the most striking formal feature of the poem, and it serves to emphasize the prevalence of the horrors the speaker describes.

Phonological Deviations

Phonological deviations involve conventional poetic licences like elision, contracted forms, aphesis, apocope, syncope etc. Blake employs the phonological deviations in some places of the whole poem as elision. This elision occurs in the following words: (thro'), (charter'd), black'ning and (mind-forg'd). The word (thro') occurs twice, the word (charter'd) occurs also twice, the word (mind-forg'd) occurs only one time and the word (black'ning) also occurs only one time in the whole poem.

Lexical and Morphological Foregrounding

The level of lexicon here includes morphology as will, for it is basic to words formation. The lexical and morphological foregroundings include stylistic devices at these levels such as, repetition of the same lexical item, repetition of synonyms, repetition of the same word but with different grammatical function, neologism, word-blends, words of dialects, registers, and words from dead languages (archaism) etc.

Repetition of the Same Lexicon

Gargesh(1990) mentions that the repetition of the same lexicon, generally, functions to depict a state of great emotional excitement or stress and emphasis. Blake uses this technique in the first two lines of the poem such as:

I wander thro' each **charter'd** street,
Near where the **charter'd** Thames does flow.

Repetition of the Same Word But with a Different Grammatical Function.

The literary writers use this repetition in the literary works to attract the attention of the readers/hearers to the message itself. Blake employs this stylistic feature in these two lines given below:

And **mark** in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, **marks** of woe.

The word **mark** is used as a verb and as nouns. This repetition functions to paint a poignant scene by linking weakness and woe to the face of every citizen in the city.

Hyphenated Expressions

Blake uses hyphenated expressions in some places such as:

Ex: The mind-forg'd, the chimney-sweepers, and the new-born

These hyphenated expressions try to incorporate many qualities into one expression.

Archaic Forms with Contractions

thro' , charter'd and the mind-forg'd

Syntactic Foregrounding

Syntactic foregrounding includes many important points such as syntactic parallelism, syntactic deviations, repetitions, enumeration, polysendeton, ellipsis, etc. Blake employs some of these stylistic devices such as:

Syntactic Parallelism

Marks of weakness, marks of woe. line 4
N+PP (NP) = N+ PP (NP)
- Chartered street = chartered Thames: NP=NP Lines 1and 2
-In every voice: in every ban, PP(P+NP)=PP(P+NP) Line7

Repetition

Anaphora: It is the repetition of the same words in the beginning of phrases, clauses, lines, etc such as:

Marks of weakness, **marks of** woe.
In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban.

Ploce: It is the intermitten repetition of words in the verse line e.g.

- **Marks of** weakness, **marks of** woe.
- **In every** voice; **in every** ban,
- In **every** cry of **every** Man,

Syntactic Deviation: Syntactic foregrounding appears in the noun phrases; (the hapless soldiers sigh) and (the youthful Harlots curse), whereas the poet neglects the possessive markers (') in front of the head nouns (sigh)and(curse) .

Another syntactic deviation occurs in line 13, stanza 4, here Blake uses the word (most) + the word through, i.e. the word (most) is followed by preposition (through). It is always naturally the word (most) is followed by the nouns or adjectives and not by the preposition (through). One pattern of stylistic inversion occurs in this line 'The mind-forg'd manacles I hear', in which the object stands before the subject and predicate.

Semantic Foregrounding

In this poem, the key image is " the mind-forg'd manacles", attitudes which take away our freedom of thought and action. Three powerful examples of those who are not free, or three encounters who have weakness and woe are the chimney_sweeper, the soldier, and the harlot. Semantic foregrounding is represented in the semantic deviations as stylistic devices with figurative and transferred meanings that produce desired semantic effects such as:

Metaphor

"The 'mind-forge'd manacles" is the key image and the central metaphor of this poem. Blake imagines the mind as a forge where "manacles" are made. The church building is literally "blackening" with smoke from the chimneys and the church as

an organization should help the poor, is blackened, metaphorically, with shame at its failure to give that help. The church should be applied by the cry of the "chimney - sweeper". Another unusual collocation or collocational clash ocurs in the successive expression:

'And the hapless soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

In theses lines given above, we notice the expression 'the hapless soldiers sigh' is compared implicitly to something has the ability to extend and run as being a concrete object. Here, Blake breaks the quality maxim and deviates from the normal expression.

Hyperbole

The poem was written shortly after the start of the French Revolution: the uprising was so bloody that the figure of speech called hyperbole was often used, as blood was said to be running down the walls

Symbolism

Blake employs the symbolism in the word "palace". This word symbolizes to the royal family, etc.

Oxymoron

The phrase "marriage hearse" is an apparent contradiction and it is used satirically to compare the wedding to a funeral and foretells what kind of future England must be faced with if things go like this. The collocational clash in this expression is deliberately made by Blake in order to attract the attention of the readers and hearers. This expression produces a high aesthetic value and quality. Obviously, oxymoronic expressions convey and emphasize the writer's emotions.

Synecdoche

It is a figure of speech in which a part of something is used to represent the whole or the whole of something is used to represent part of it. It is considered to be a special kind of metonymy. The use of "Face" in the first stanza dehumanizes the words - the persona is not seeing marks of weakness or woe in a human person, just a blank face. The poet chooses the word "face" instead of "person" to show the loss and sorrow of the people.

CONCLUSION

London is a poem by William Blake, published in songs of experience in 1794. It is one of the few poems in songs of experience that doesn't have a corresponding poem in songs of innocence. This poem is full of the vivid images and the various techniques. Blake shows us the great suffering of the British Society during the French Revolution and Industrial Revolution, so that "London" deserves "the mightiest brief poem". "London" is a very pessimistic poem that expresses no solutions to the issues mentioned within each line. It is the most outstanding poem in "The songs of experience". In this poem, Blake utters his social criticism and shows the miseries of the common people in London. This stylistic study finds out a lot of linguistic foregroundings in each level of the concerned linguistic levels given above. It reveals how the poet deviates and violates the linguistic norms in many positions throughout the poem. The interpretation of the whole poem is built up from a consistency in the linguistic description and the interpretation of individual features one by one.

References

1. Alabi,V.A.(2007) Lexci-Syntactic, Phonological and Graphological   Patterns, Choices, and Devices in Discourse. Ilorin: Dep. of English, University of Ilorin.
2. Burke, M. (ed.) (2014) The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics London   and New York: Routledge.
3. Crystal, D.(1985) A Dictionary of Linguistics and phonetics. U.K: Basil Blackwell.
4. Crystal, D.& Davy, D. (1969) Investigating English Style. London: Longman.
5. Gargish, R. (1990) Linguistic Perspective of Literary Style. Delhi: University of Delhi.
6. Leech, G. (1969) A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry London: Longman.
7. Lodge, K.(2009) A Critical Introduction to Phonetics. London & New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
8. Mukarovsky,J. (1932) Standard Language and Poetic Language. In D.C. Freeman (ed) 1970:40_56.
9. Ofuya,A. (2007) English phonetics and phonology. Critical Perspectives on English Language &Literature. Dep. Of English, University of Ilorin.
10. Simpson, P. (2014) Stylistics: A Resource Book for students, London: Routledge.
11. Short, M.& Candlin, C. (1989) Teaching Study Skills for English Literature in Reading, analyzing and Teaching literature. London : Longman.
12. Widdowson, H.G. (1975) Stylistics and Teaching of Literature. London. Longman.
13. Zhan, C. (2013), William Blake and His Poem "London", Shandong, China: Qingdao University Press

Websites

http://enWikipedia.org/wiki/WilliamBlake,November,2019
www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43673/london-56d222777e969 Retrieved on 25th of November, 2019