A Stylistic Analysis of the Short Story "The Little Match Girl"

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This study aims at conducting an extensive stylistic analysis of the short story "The Little Match Girl" written by the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen. The study attempts to analyse stylistically four language levels pertinent to the story; namely phonological level, syntactic level, graphological level and semantic level. The phonological style of the author comprises four sound features: alliteration, assonance, consonance and rhyme. The syntactic style of the author is chiefly characterised by frequent deviation from English word order. The graphological style of the author is featured by excessive use of punctuation marks such as comma, semicolon, en dash, hyphen and inverted commas. The semantic level in the story is primarily influenced by the utilising elegant synonymy. It is found that the author managed to create mapping between semantically unrelated words, making them synonyms in context. In addition, the study analyses three figures of speech found in the story namely: personification, simile and hyperbole. It could be concluded that the language of the author is characterised by variation and uniqueness, in which he employs several linguistic and poetic devices to exhibit his unparalleled style and fingerprint, making the story deep, touching and interesting to follow.

Keywords: *Stylistic Analysis, Alliteration, Assonance, Consonance.*

1. Introduction

Stylistics places a major emphasis on studying the aesthetic aspect of language in its two media: written and oral. Stylistics looks into many types of language stretches including: literary texts, speeches, legal texts, news reports, advertisements, jokes and many more. Linguists place stylistics in a mediated position between linguistics and literary criticism, with application of linguistic methods and rules to literary texts, which elucidates naming stylistics as "linguistic criticism" or "literary linguistics" (Fowler, 1986; Fabb et al, 1987). Style is a Latin word that is used in referring to the method by which the writer utilises the means of language, selection of words, order of sentences and the use of poetic devices (Khan, Raffique, Saddique, 2014). Writer's style reflects his/her fingerprint, through which he communicates thoughts, feelings and even personality to the recipients. One sometimes can guess truly the name of an author through his style of writing, in the sense that some writers tend to deviate from the norms of language by violating or breaking all language sub-systems including phonetic, graphological, morphological, syntactic and semantic systems, making his/her style unique and distinguished. Linguists make many attempts to reach a working definition of stylistics. Allan. et al (1988) defines stylistics as:

"A branch of linguistics which studies the characteristics of situationally distinctive use of language with particular reference to literary language and tries to establish the principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individuals and social groups in their use of language".

Lawal, (1997) further contends that stylistics refers to applying linguistic rules to a literary text. According to Verdonk (2002), stylistics is the study of distinctive features of language with clarification of their purposes and effects. Widdowson (1975) advances one more definition of stylistics as examining literary language from a linguistic perspective, in which stylistics creates a connection between literary criticism and linguistics. He adds that "Stylistics is an area of mediation between two disciplines… that Stylistics can provide a way of mediating between two subjects: English Language and literature". From the foregoing discussion, there is no general consensus over the definition of stylistics, however it is agreed on that stylistics is a separate discipline playing a mediating role between linguistics and literature.

Historically speaking, stylistics began as a distinctive discipline between 1910 and 1930 with the work of some Russian Formalists and some British and American semanticists. The three groups of linguistics stress the significance of studying the aesthetic use of both literary and non-literary texts. During the 1960s and 1970s, stylistic studies increased in which stylisticians employed descriptive methods of linguistic theories in literary works such as those of American and European structuralism, Transformational Grammar and systemic-functional grammar. At that time, many journals specialized in stylistics appeared and stylistics was recognised as a separate discipline. In the 1980s and 1990s, interest in stylistics dropped as many linguists

refrained from carrying out stylistic studies and interested more in cultural and mono-linguistic analysis. However, claims supporting the study of stylistics remain robust as critics are still referring to linguistic methods when explaining literary texts (Cureton, 1992).

A very essential principle of stylistic study is "foregrounding". This term is recognised by Simpson (2004) as the technique of making language strange, which involves deviating from the rules of language or using the means of parallelism. According to Childs and Fowler (2006), foregrounding is easily identified when the writer violates from the norms or conventions of language so that he transcends the boundaries of language. One glaring example of foregrounding is the use of metaphor and other literary devices in literature, which is regarded as a semantic deviation. In discourse, foregrounded clauses or sentences contain the most significant ideas and thoughts in the text that the writer or poet attempts to convey to the reader. Whereas the function of other clauses in the text is to support or provide more clarifying details of the foregrounded clauses.

Foregrounding is mostly exhibited in literature, particularly in poetry. Poetry is distinguished from prose by style. In other words, poets deviate from the conventional style of language, where they abundantly employ figures of speech e.g. metaphor, simile, alliteration, metonymy, pun and others. Poets tend to violate language rules in order to direct the attention to their style of writing not to what they write (Leech, 1969). In the view of foregrounding, several language deviations can be found in literature.

1- Semantic Deviation: This implies how simple words can express extraordinary meaning or using words to convey deeper meanings different from what they used to be.

2- Phonological Deviation: This requires the use of some sounds to create rhythmic language. This can be identified with the repetition of sounds or missing sounds.

3- Graphological Deviation: This is manifested in the unordinary use of punctuation marks, capitalisation and font-size or type.

4- Morphological Deviation: It is connected with any irregularities in the formation or structure of words.

5- Syntactic Deviation: It is known as violation of the grammatical rules or norms of language such as ordering words in a sentence wrongly or using tenses inappropriately.

6- Historical Deviation: It is related, for instance, to borrowing words from old or middle English and using them in contemporary texts. Those words are no longer employed in everyday language.

When doing stylistic analysis, stylisticians look primarily at the irregularities found in the target text compared to regular texts. The following lines, which are taken from a poem published in 1939 by the American poet Cummings illustrate many types of deviation.

love is more thicker than forget
more thinner than recall
more seldom than a wave is wet
more frequent than to fail

Simpson (2004) argues that one of the most conspicuous deviation in this poem is ignoring orthographic and spelling rules of English. More specifically, the poet removes all punctuation marks such as full stops, commas or semi colons. In addition to the removal of capitalisation in the onset of each line. The poem is also untitled, which is the most notable violation. Those lines deviate from the grammatical rules of English, in the sense that the poet uses "more + adj+er" as in *more thinner*. In addition, the poet uses "than + verb" as in *than forget or than to fail*. Those instances manifest a glaring violation of English grammatical rules.

Having viewed the concept of stylistics together with introducing closely related concepts such as foregrounding and its types, it is fitting to indicate that this study attempts to analyse stylistically a short story entitled "The Little Match Girl". Such stylistic analysis requires applying the linguistic rules to the story by looking into all distinctive linguistic features employed by the author including: phonetic, semantic, syntactic, graphological, morphological and historical features.

2. Objectives of the Study

This study aims at fulfilling the following objective:

1- Conducting an extensive stylistic analysis of the English short story "The Little Match Girl" written by the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen.

3. Related Literature

This review of literature depicts some previous studies that conducted a stylistic analysis on literary works. Those studies aim principally at showing the aesthetic use of language in those works alongside deviation from the norms of English.

Yeibo (2011) conducts a discourse-stylistic analysis of mood structures in selected poems of J.P. Clark- Bekederemo. The researcher argues that Clark-Bekederemo's works have not been extensively examined from a linguistic point of view. This study examines mood structures (declarative, interrogative and imperative moods) in the poems of Bekederemo with the aim of gaining insight into the way interlocutors speak, judge their role and attitude in discourse. In

analysing mood of the dialogue, the researcher employs Halliday's systemic functional Grammar. Such an approach helps the researcher investigate the stylistic and discourse aspects of the dialogue. In other words, how the language communicated and what is communicated. The study concludes that mood structures used by poets are heavily dependent on objectives of language use in a particular situation.

Mugair and Mahadi, (2014) present an overview of the two inseparable concepts: style and stylistics. This research study is divided into three main parts: (i) Part one introduces stylistics as a discipline and other linguistic principles. This section presents types of stylistic analysis and some linguistic features that are intimately related to stylistics such as choice of words, sentence structure, cohesion, coherence, punctuation marks and figures of speech. (ii) Section two discusses the works of some authors on style such as *Fundamental of Good Writin*g by Brooks and Warren, *A Short Way to Better English, state*s by Chapman. (iii) Section three is devoted to the conclusion. In this study, the researchers choose the speech of Martin Luther King

"I have a dream" to analyse its linguistic features stylistically. The researchers conclude that style works in tandem with the spirit of liberty and equality in order to make the speech great one.

Jaafar, (2014) implements a stylistic analysis of two poems. The first poem is "maggie and milly and molly and may" by E. E. Cummings, while the second poem is "A Kite for Aibhín" by Seamus Heaney. The study attempts to apply plenty of linguistic features to the two poems. More specifically, the study conducts extensive analysis of phonological, morphological, graphological, syntactic and figurative features of the two poems. In addition, the writer discusses the aesthetic use of language in the two poems including assonance, alliteration, repetition and simile. The author concludes that a stylistic analysis of a poem enhances understanding of the literary work. Stylistics give readers the opportunity to enjoy and feel the aesthetic aspect of language.

In a parallel way, Khan, Raffique and Saddique, (2014) carry out a stylistic study on a poem entitled " The Onset" by Robert Frost. The poem which was published in 1923 discusses two opposing ideas; commitment to life and peacefulness of death so that a person falls in the dilemma of fulfilling his life dreams or remaining in the wood, which leads him to doubtfulness. The authors look into the stylistic use of some poetic devices in the poem such as symbolism, imagery, simile, metaphor and hyperbole. Furthermore, the study discusses some sound devices used by the author in the poem such as alliteration, consonance, assonance and rhyme scheme. The study comes to the conclusion that the poem has very deep meanings, in which the poet expresses using poetic devices like winter and spring to symbolise life and death.

In a similar vein, Khan and Khan (2015) analyse statistically a novel entitled " Black Beauty" by Anna Swell. The study aims chiefly at discussing the aesthetic use of language in the novel by analysing several literary devices. The novel is an autobiography of a horse named "black beauty" and is narrated by the horse himself depicting his own life moments from cruelty to kindness. In analysing the language of the novel, the researchers employ Halliday's Systemic Function Linguistics in which the text is analysed by using different inter-connected levels including formal level and situational context level. In addition, the study analyses both phonological features (sound repetition, sound elision and elongation of sounds) and gramaphological features (punctuation marks, capitalisation, spelling, brackets, hyphenation, dashes and pictures). Having analysed the text thoroughly, it is concluded that aesthetic language in the text fosters comprehension especially in a text with multilayers of senses.

Having reviewed some previous studies, it is fitting to say that analysing some literary works is of a paramount important to confirm the following points. First, the scope of the aforementioned studies is restricted to literary works excluding Mugair and Mahadi (2014) who discussed a speech of Martin Luther King. Some studies analyse poems (Yeibo, 2011; Jaafar, 2014; Khan, Raffique and Saddique, 2014), whereas other studies discuss novels (Khan and Khan, 2015). Second, some of those studies look into only poetic devices in the text (Jaafar, 2014), while others look into linguistic devices solely (Mugair and Mahadi, 2014, Khan and Khan, 2015). The present study attempts to analyse statistically the short story "The Little Match Girl". This study fills a gap in literature by merging with a deeper insight three main aspects of stylistic analysis namely: linguistic features, poetic devices and aesthetic use of language.

4. Methodology

Extensive stylistic analysis is made for the short story "The Little Match Girl". The analysis aims primarily at highlighting the most common areas of deviation from the norms of English in the story. The study conducts a stylistic analysis of four linguistic levels: namely, phonological, syntactic, semantic and graphological. In addition, the study analysed stylistically some figures of speech found in the story such as personification, simile and hyperbole.

4.1 Introduction to the Author

Hans Christian Andersen is a Danish author, born in 1805 in Denmark and died in 1875. He was an author of plays, novels, short stories and poems but he is mostly known for writing fairy tales, which were translated into more than 125 languages. Among the most popular fairy tales of Andersen are The Emperor's New Clothes, The Nightingale, The Steadfast Tin Soldier, The Red Shoes, The Princess and the Pea, The Snow Queen, The Ugly Duckling and The Little Match Girl. Fairy tales were not targeting children solely, but rather people of different ages. Andersen' s writing style is characterised by the overuse of idioms and utterances of colloquial language, deviating from the norms of literary language. The stories of Andersen reflect his

own feelings and inner state towards others and the world, in the sense that he shows his characters as depressed, hopeless, despaired and alienated to exhibit his own reality, which includes living in poverty, losing his father early and getting teased because of his shape.

4.2 Background of the Story

"The Little Match Girl" is a short story written by Hans Christian Andersen in 1845. The story has been used in many types of media, in that it was animated, filmed as a movie and even video games. It tells a story of a poor and miserable girl who trembles and shivers of cold in an attempt to sell matches on the night of Christmas. Nobody bought anything from her and as a result she was paid no money. She watched people celebrating Christmas indoors, having food and drink and enjoying the warmth of their homes. She was so cold and tried to warm herself by drawing a match, which flamed for seconds then vanished. In despair, she lit all the matches but they quickly went out all. She spent the whole night shivering from cold and nobody noticed her struggle and suffer to survive. The next morning, she was found dead. In this story, the author makes a successful attempt to draw the attention to the needy, who spend a big portion of their lives suffering speechlessly before the eyes of the rich.

5. Stylistic Analysis of the Story

In analysing stylistically the language of the short story "The Little Match Girl", the analysis covers many levels of language including; phonological, syntactic, semantic and graphological. In addition, the analysis of the story extends to figures of speech utilised by the author including personification, simile and hyperbole.

The phonological level of language can be categorised into many sub-categories namely alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme scheme.

Alliteration: A stylistic device where the first consonant sound is repeated in a series of words. In this story, the writer mentioned many examples of alliteration throughout the whole story. e.g. carried quantities of matches (line 10), through which the winds whistles (line 23), match might (line 25), against the wall, and warm (line 26), she held her hands (line 28), it burned brightly (line, 34), the most magnificent (line 42), they were with God (line 61), Stiff and stark sat the child, (line, 63), wanted to warm herself, (line 64), slightest suspicion, (line 65).

Assonance: A stylistic device where vowel sounds in adjacent syllables or words are the same or similar to each other. The story under analysis has shown many examples of assonance as follows: little girl, (line, 3), They were, (line, 4), little thing, (line, 5), fair hair, (line, 14), you know (17), Year's Eve; yes (line, 17), corner formed, (line 18), go home, (line, 20), roof, through, (line, 23), which the wind whistled, (line, 23), largest cracks, (line, 23), dared take, (line, 25), stark sat, (line, 63), Someone is just dead!" said (line 48).

Consonance: A stylistic device where consonant sound in neighbouring words are similar or identical. This story depicts many instances of consonance as follows; little girl, (line 3), her mother, (line 4-5), laid hold, (line, 7), feet that were quite red, (line, 10), She crept along trembling, (line, 13), fair hair, (line, 14), colder and colder, (line, 20), her father, (line 21), numbed with cold (line 24), warm, bright flame, (line, 27), and where the light fell on the wall, there the wall became transparent like a veil, (lines 34-35), Someone is just dead!" said, (line 48), so bright and radiant, (line, 52), whole bundle, (line 55), keeping her grandmother near her (lines 56-57), brilliant light that it (line, 57), so beautiful and so tall, (59).

Rhyme: A stylistic device that is based mainly on the repetition of sounds or syllables, typically at the end of verse or line. The following two examples are taken from the story under investigation: Her little feet she had drawn close up to her, but she grew colder and colder, and to go home she did not venture (lines, 19-20), for her old grandmother, the only person who had loved her, and who was now no more, had told her (lines 48-50).

Syntactic Level: The syntactic analysis of this short story "The Little Match \Ggirl" is mostly centred around the order of words in the sentences of the story. The writer, several times, deviates from the norms of English word order, which is Subject, Verb, Object. This is exhibited in the following instances.

Most terribly cold it was (line 1), In this cold and darkness there went along the street a poor little girl (lines 2-3), so large were they (line 5), From all the windows the candles were gleaming (line, 16), and it smelt so deliciously of roast goose (16-17), yes, of that she thought (line, 17), to go home she did not venture (line, 20), from her father she would certainly get blows, and at home it was cold too (line, 21-22), On the table was spread a snow-white tablecloth (lines, 35-36), in the lustre there stood the old grandmother, (lines, 51-52). Never formerly had the grandmother been so beautiful and so tall (58- 59), But in the corner, at the cold hour of dawn, sat the poor girl.

It is obviously noticed that the writer either changed the whole order of words in some sentences of this story as exemplified above or front a preposition together with its complement, where the language mostly does not act like this.

Graphological Level: The story is full of punctuation marks in the sense that the author employs most types of punctuation marks in the text.

Comma: It is noticed that the writer overuses commas in the text in order to separate short clauses in compound sentences or complex sentences. The following are some examples on the use of comma in the text.

(Line 1, it snowed, and was nearly quite dark)

(line 10-11, she carried a quantity of matches in an old apron, and she held a bundle of them in her hand)
(line,15 but of that, of course, she never once now thought)
(line 21-23, from her father she would certainly get blows, and at home it was cold too, for above her she had only the roof)

Semicolon: The author of the story has heavily employed semicolon in the text. The use of semicolons can chiefly be attributed to separating two independent clauses rather than using conjunction. Below are some examples on the use of semicolon.

(line 1, Most terribly cold it was; it snowed),
(line, 4-5 which her mother had her to worn; so large were they;),
(line 7-8 One slipper was nowhere to be found; the other had been laid hold of by an urchin),
(line 34-35,on the table was spread 35a snow-white tablecloth; upon it was a splendid porcelain service).

En Dash: En dash is used to form complex compound adjectives. In this text, the author used en dash whenever he desires to depict a deep description of the state of the poor little girl. Let's consider the following examples:

(line 13, She crept along trembling with cold and hunger--a very picture of sorrow),
(line 62- 63, sat the poor girl, with rosy cheeks and with a smiling mouth, leaning against the wall--frozen to death),
(line 1-2, and was nearly quite dark, and evening-- the last evening of the year).

Hyphen: Normally used to connect two or more closely related words into compound term. The use of hyphen in this story is illustrated in the examples below.

(line 32, she had only the remains of the burnt-out match in her hand),
(line 35, On the table was spread a snow-white tablecloth).

Inverted commas: usually used to indicate the beginning and the end of discourse as exemplified in the following sentences: "Someone is just dead!" said the little girl (line 47), "Grandmother!" cried the little one (line, 52), She wanted to warm herself," people said (line 63-64).

Semantic Level: The author of "The Little Match Girl" employs some semantic relationships unlike their ordinary use. One of the most glaring examples is the use of synonymy in the text. Throughout the story, the writer uses different words in referring to the word girl as shown below.

A poor little <u>girl</u> (line, 2-3), the little <u>maiden</u> (line 9), the poor little <u>thing</u>! (line,14) the little <u>one</u> (line 52).

It is noticed from the above mentioned examples that the writer uses several words to describe the girl. He uses maiden, thing and one. In reality, the words one and thing are not synonyms of girl, but they have symbolic meaning in that because no one cares about this poor girl, no one sympathises with her, she is deemed as a thing for others but not as a human being.

The writer utilises synonymy abundantly throughout the story as shown in the following examples:

(line 3) <u>bare</u>headed, and with <u>naked</u> feet.
(lines 10-11), she carried a <u>quantity</u> of matches in an old apron, and she held a <u>bundle</u> of them in her hand.
(lines 11-12), <u>nobody</u> and <u>no one,</u>
(lines 26, 32), <u>draw it </u>against the wall, She <u>rubbed</u> another against the wall.
(line 27), how it <u>blazed</u>, how it <u>burnt.</u>
(Line, 31), the small <u>flame went ou</u>t, <u>the stove vanished.</u>

Figures of Speech: The author utilised three types of figures of speech in his story: (i) first, personification as in line 23 (the wind whistled); (ii) second, simile as in lines 27-28 (It was a warm, bright flame, like a candle) and lines 33-34 (the wall became transparent like a veil). (Lines 53, 54, you vanish like the warm stove, like the delicious roast goose, and 54 like the magnificent Christmas tree and; (iii) third, hyperbole as illustrated in lines 56-57, (And the matches gave such a brilliant light that it was brighter than at noonday).

It could be said that stylistic analysis provides readers with a deep insight into literary works. Stylistic analysis split the literary work into lots of smaller pieces, making the mission of the reader to understand easier and quicker. In analysing stylistically "The Little Match Girl", an attempt is made to highlight the aesthetic side of the story together with showing the implicit themes included by the writer. It could be said that stylistic analysis of a literary work helps gain a thorough insight into that work and convey the implicit message of the author to the reader

6. Conclusion

The present study aims chiefly at implementing an extensive stylistic analysis of the short story "The Little Match Girl" written by Hans Christian Andersen. The analysis of the story covers four language levels: First, phonological level, which is comprised of alliteration, assonance, consonance and rhyme. Second, syntactic level, which is centred mainly around deviation from word order norms of English. Third, graphological level, which is characterised by overuse of some punctuation marks such as comma, semicolon, en dash, hyphen and inverted commas.

Fourth, semantic level, which is mostly featured by the unordinary use of synonymy by the writer. In addition to the aforementioned four levels of language, this study analyses stylistically some figures of speech found in the short story, comprising personification, simile and hyperbole. It could be concluded the short story "The Little Match Girl" has a lot to talk about and is full of language features to be analysed stylistically as the writer style is characterised by deviating from language norms.

7. Acknowledgement

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