

Schema Refreshment in ‘Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T S’: Application of Schema Theory

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Abstract: Cognitive stylistics, an interdisciplinary field, is expanding rapidly. Its concerns are the linguistic choices and patterns in a text and mental processes and cognitive representations of a reader in comprehension and an interpretation of literary texts. It entails a number of theories; one of them is schema theory. Schema theory is a useful tool in cognitive stylistics which refers to background knowledge and comprehension. One of the uses of schema theory in stylistics is to identify literariness and discourse deviation. Reader's existing schema i.e. prior knowledge interacts with the text and affects its comprehension and interpretation. To what extent reader's existing schemata (plural of schema) are confirmed or challenged by his / her reading experience of a literary text controls an interpretation of it. As world of a text comes into existence through language and text structure, deviant language and text affects world schemata leading to schema refreshment in different aspects. This paper explores a uses of schema theory in an interpretation of literary text. The selected literary text for the study is Nissim Ezekiel's poem 'Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.'. It attempts a detailed linguistic analysis of the poem and combines it with schema theory which results in schematic foregrounding and cognitive defamiliarisation. It sheds light on an interaction of grammar and lexis of the selected poem with the reader's schema of standard English and a consequent effect of schema change leading to schema refreshment.

Key Words: cognitive stylistics, schema theory, foregrounding, schema refreshment.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Stylistics originated in poetics and especially in the rhetoric of the ancient classical world. Modern stylistics emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century. It has been constantly enriching and updating its methods of analysis. Earlier it was 'writerly' in its general theoretical orientation. And 'readerly' dimensions such as an account of mental processes which are affected by reading and an interpretation of literary texts were missing. Russian formalists especially Roman Jakobson, Viktor Shklovsky and Vladimir Propp played a pivotal role in its initial stage. Russian formalism continued in Prague school under the heading of structuralism. Gradually Prague school drifted away from formalism and headed towards functionalism.

In the twenty first century it has taken a cognitive turn. Exploration of cognitive structures that readers employ while reading texts is of paramount importance for today's stylisticians. They extensively borrow from cognitive linguistics and Artificial Intelligence which results in an emergence of cognitive stylistics and cognitive poetics.

'Contemporary stylistics goes far beyond the rhetoric, poetics, formalism, structuralism and functionalism of the past to embrace corpus, critical, cognitive, pedagogical, pragmatic, gender, multimodal and most recently, neuroscientific approaches'(Burke: 2018 :02). According to Burke it has one foot in language studies and the other in literary studies. There are many recent developments in the studies of cognition and literature. One of them is an emergence of cognitive stylistics. Schema theory in cognitive stylistics has been proved immensely beneficial for an analysis of literary texts especially poetry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Cognitive Stylistics:

Recently cognitive scientific approach to literary description has taken over. It is called cognitive poetics. Cognitive stylistics is also known as cognitive poetics. There is an interface among linguistics, literary studies and cognitive science in cognitive stylistics. 'While cognitive stylistics is intended to supplement, rather than supplant, existing methods of analysis, it does aim to shift the focus away from models of text and compositions towards

models that make explicit the links between the human mind and the process of reading' (Burke : 2018: 39). In it researchers investigate linguistic as well as cognitive make-up. In the process of an interpretation of a text it combines the analysis of linguistic choices and patterns in a text and a mental processes a reader activates with due weightage to linguistic creativity and its interpretation. It entails schema theory, cognitive metaphor theory, conceptual metaphor theory, text world theory, blendings, mental space theories, etc.

Schema Theory:

Schema theory is a key idea and one of the lines of enquiry in cognitive stylistics. Schema is a prior knowledge which is activated by readers within their mental store for comprehending a text. 'Schemas are organized representations of background knowledge which readers bring along to text' (Short : 2013 : 231).

In the development of schema theory, Kant's views cannot be neglected. According to him new information and ideas could only have meaning when related to something already known (Katunar and Eterovic). Bartlett used the term in the sense of a prior knowledge (Hill). In the 1970s, an American Cognitivist scientist in 'Artificial Intelligence' Marvin Minsky reintroduced the schema construct in psychology. Rumelhart (as quoted by Burke : 2018 : 269) applied Minsky's computational insights to cognitive psychology. Rumelhart and Norman suggested three processes of learning and an acquisition of information. They are- i) 'accretion' i.e. adding new information ii) 'tuning' i.e. slightly altering existing information and iii) restructuring i.e. creating new schemata. A book 'Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding' by Schank and Abelson (1977) is the foundational text of modern schema theory. 'Script' refers to dynamic sequence of events. Later Schank by breaking scripts into component parts termed them 'memory organization packets'. Sanford and Garrod used the term 'scenario' for referring to situation specific knowledge used for interpreting a text (Aryadoust).

As schemata are structured around experiences that are bound by our individual language, culture, age, gender, etc., it is immensely helpful in socio-cultural readings of texts. Schema theory has number of uses in stylistics. It is used for linking a string of events in narratives by drawing inferences, in the study of incongruous scripts, in the study of 'mind style' which refers to deviant thinking style rather than thinking styles in general, in the study of other worlds, in an identification of literariness and discourse deviation, genre distinction, defamiliarisation, foregrounding, etc. 'Schema theory is important not only because it explains a central mechanism by which all reading takes place, but also because 'special effects' can be created by an author through the subversion, exploitation, alteration, or violation of a reader's schema knowledge' (Burke : 2018 : 268).

Schema Refreshment:

Schema refreshment refers to any interaction with literary texts which changes schemata i.e. new schemata is constructed in contrast to preservation and reinforcement of the old one. In schema refreshment conventional ways of viewing the world are disturbed and refreshed. In literature, along with ideational and interpersonal function, function of schematic change is equally significant. Some kind of schema challenge resulting in schema refreshment is a hallmark of literariness. Literary comprehension requires a challenging interplay between reader's schematic knowledge and a text.

Schemata, in the broadest sense, includes schemata of the world, text and language. Deviant language and text structures have the potential for schema change. A deviant world of a text may change world schemata. A deviant text structure alters a reader's text schemata. A deviant language may change language schemata. As a world of a discourse comes into existence through language and text structure, deviant language and text structures affect world schemata. The irregularity in language use goes against the reader's linguistic expectations and disrupts reader's schemata surprising him/her. According to Cook linguistic and structural deviations in a text result in schematic deviations in reader (Hidalgo). He equates 'defamiliarisation' with 'discourse deviation' which takes place through the mechanism of foregrounding and emphasizes that it is literature's 'schema refreshing' property. For Shklovsky (as quoted by Burke : 2018 : 88) 'By undoing the familiarity of things, observers are led to examine what otherwise would fall in a sort of automatic, habitual kind of attention'. For him it is an artistic technique used in literary language for de-automatizing. All in all literary discourse is schema refreshing.

Foregrounding in Stylistics:

According to Simpson (as quoted by Burke : 2018 :87-88) 'foregrounding refers to a form of textual patterning which is motivated specifically for literary –aesthetic purposes'. There are number of ways in which linguistic foregrounding takes place. In stylistics foregrounding can take the form of deviation or parallelism. Simpson (as quoted by Burke : 2018 : 88-89) states 'capable of working at any level of language, foregrounding typically involves a stylistic distortion of some sort either through an aspect of the text which deviated from a linguistic norm or alternatively, where an aspect of the text is brought to the fore through repetition or parallelism'.

Linguistic deviation disrupts the normal processes of communication. It is not random but follows a rational of its own. It refers to waving of rules or conventions of language. By using poetic license poets ignore rules and conventions generally observed by users of language. 'By using creative license, a poet may transcend the limits of the language to explore and communicate new areas of experience' (Leech: 1969 : 36). Lexical deviation creates degree of strangeness. It takes place through neologism, functional conversion, taking words associated with one variety of English and using with another variety, etc. Grammatical deviation takes place at syntactic level of grammar. 'The number of grammatical rules in English is large, and therefore the foregrounding possibilities via grammatical deviation is also very large' (Short: 2013 : 47). Graphological deviation is created by lines on the page and the spaces, discarding of capital letters and punctuation, etc. Semantic deviation refers to transference of meaning through metaphor in a wider sense. It creates a sense of nonsense and absurdity. Dialectal deviation refers to the use of non-standard dialects, dialecticism and over borrowing from other dialects in English. Deviation of register takes place through mixing of registers. Phonological deviation refers to distortion in pronunciation for the convenience of rhyming, unusual word stresses, etc.

'Parallelism is to do with 'the introduction of extra regularities, not irregularities, into the language' (Leech: 1969:62). By opening up associations, it helps to perceive semantic relations which do not exist in the system of language system as a whole. It is often connected with rhetorical emphasis and memorability. According to Short it prompts readers to find 'semantic relationship between parallel parts (2013 : 67). It can take place at grammatical, phonological, semantic and lexical level.

3. METHODOLOGY:

The conventions of schema theory are applied to the reading experience of 'Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.', a poem in Indian English by Nissim Ezekiel. Schema theory is used to identify 'discourse deviation' which brings about a change in the reader's schemata. The focus of this paper is to examine how reader's prior knowledge of standard English is challenged through grammatical, lexical, graphological, dialectal and registral deviations in the selected poem which results in schema disruption and refreshment. In order to shed light on schematic foregrounding leading to cognitive defamiliarisation, detailed analysis of different types of linguistic and textual deviation in the poem is attempted by using qualitative research designs.

4. THE SELECTED TEXT FOR STUDY:

'Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.'

Friends,
our dear sister
is departing for foreign
in two three days,
and
we are meeting today
to wish her bon voyage.

You are all knowing friends,
What sweetness is in Miss Pushpa.
I don't mean only external sweetness
but internal sweetness.
Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling
even for no reason
but simply because she is feeling.

Miss Pushpa is coming
from very high family.
Her father was renowned advocate
in Bulsar or Surat,
I am not remembering now which place.

Surat? Ah, yes,
once only I stayed in Surat

with family members
 of my nucle’s very old friend-
 his wife was cooking nicely.....
 that was long time ago.

Coming back to Miss Pushpa
 she is most popular lady
 with men also and ladies also.

Whenever I asked her to do anything,
 she was saying, ‘Just now only
 I will do it.’ That is showing
 good spirit. I am always
 appreciating the good spirit.

Pushpa Miss is never saying no.
 Whatever I or anybody is asking
 she is always saying yes,
 and today she is going
 to improve her prospects
 and we are wishing her bon voyage.

Now I ask other speakers to speak
 and afterwards Miss Pushpa
 will do the summing up.

4. ANALYSIS:

Analysis of Linguistic Deviation in ‘Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.’:

‘Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.’ is written by Nissim Ezekiel who is considered the foremost among the modern Indian poets in English. It is included in his collection of poems called ‘Hymns in Darkness’. It is a part of the eight poems appeared in 1970s under the group ‘Very Indian Poems in Indian English’. It reflects Indians’ struggle to speak in English and their cultural and conventional obsessions. It is an introductory speech in a farewell party which is arranged in an honour of Miss Pushpa T S who is going abroad to improve her future prospects. By using Gujarati brand of English, Nissim Ezekiel ridicules the errors in grammar, syntax and idioms which semi-educated Indians commit while speaking in English. In the poem foregrounding is attained through linguistic deviation which takes place at various levels. It takes place in the form of misuse of present progressive tense, prepositions, omission of articles and translations from vernacular expressions, dialectal deviation, mixing of registers, lack of capitalization at the beginning of lines, etc. The following table illustrates it.

Sr No	Extracts from ‘Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.’	Analysis of Linguistic Deviation from Standard English
01.	‘We are meeting today’	As people have already gathered for the party, present perfect tense should be used instead of present progressive.
02.	‘Miss Pushpa is coming’	It reflects Indians habit of using present progressive tense. Instead simple present tense should be used.
03.	‘She was saying’	There is misuse of present progressive tense. Instead Simple present tense should be used.
04.	‘Pushpa Miss is never saying no’	As for denoting habitual actions simple present tense is used, there is misuse of present progressive tense. ‘Pushpa Miss’ involves reversal word order which is typical Indian.
05.	‘Whatever I or anybody is asking’	It reflects Indians habit of using present progressive tense. Instead simple present tense should be used.
06.	‘She is always saying yes’	As for denoting habitual actions simple present tense is used, there is misuse of present progressive tense.

07.	‘We are wishing her bon voyage’	It reflects Indians habit of using present progressive tense. Instead simple present tense should be used.
08.	‘That is showing good spirit’	There is misuse of present progressive tense. Instead simple present tense should be used.
09.	‘You are all knowing friends’	‘Know’ is a stative verb in the extract. As stative verbs are never used in progressive form, it should be in simple present tense.
10.	‘She is feeling’	Verbs of perception like ‘feel’ are never used in progressive form, it should be in simple present tense.
11.	‘I am always appreciating the good spirit’	It involves misuse of progressive form, it should be in simple present tense.
12.	‘I am not remembering’	Verbs of perception like ‘remember ’ never take progressive form, it should be in simple present tense.
13.	‘from very high family’	Use of an adjective ‘high’ is not correct. An indefinite article ‘a’ before ‘very’ is omitted. This expression bears an influence of vernacular expression.
14.	‘was renowned advocate’	Omission of an indefinite article ‘a’ before ‘renowned’ may hurt as it denotes vague reference to Miss Pushpa’s parental background.
15.	‘good spirit’	Omission of preposition ‘in’ before ‘good’ results in distortion of a standard form.
16.	‘is departing for foreign’	Use of ‘foreign’ as an adjective is incorrect which bears an influence of vernacular expression. Use of ‘departing’ in the sense of ‘leaving’ in colloquial style results in deviation of register.
17.	‘was cooking nicely’	An adverbial use of ‘nicely’ results in distortion of meaning as it does not convey the idea of ‘good’ here.
18.	‘that was long time ago’	An indefinite article ‘a’ before ‘long’ is omitted.
19.	‘she is most popular lady’	Omission of definite article ‘the’ before ‘most’ is deviant as it qualifies superlative degree.
20.	‘Now I ask other speakers to speak’	Definite article ‘the’ before ‘other’ is omitted. There is an unnecessary use of ‘speakers’. It should be ‘I ask the others to speak’
21.	‘dear sister’	The expression is colloquial and bears an influence of vernacular expression. It should be ‘dear Pushpa’
22.	‘in two three days’	It’s a translation of vernacular expression. The correct expression is ‘in two to three days’
23.	‘bon voyage’	It reflects an use of an archaic phrase in colloquial style.
24.	‘external sweetness and internal sweetness’	The expression which refers to Miss Pushpa’s qualities of head and heart is ambiguous.
25.	‘Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling’	It refers to Miss Pushpa’s nature but it is very confusing as it may compliment or criticize.
26.	‘family members’	It should be ‘members of the family’.
27.	‘with men also and ladies also’	Here the collocation is not correct which is a translation of vernacular expression. It should be ‘with men and women’
28.	‘Just now only’	This is typical Indian English expression which bears vernacular influence.
29.	‘will do the summing up’	The expression suffers from circumlocution as the use of ‘do’ is unnecessary because summing up conveys the sense.
30.	‘Pushpa T S’	As initials are written after name, it is typical Indian English.

Schema Refreshment in ‘Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.’:

Assumption that any poet is well acquainted with the language chosen for the expression of his /her creative mind states that any sort of linguistic deviation from the standard variety of the chosen language is deliberate and purposeful. The same is true about Nissim Ezekiel. He like Nigerian and West Indian writers of serious literature, who mix various dialects and pidgins with standard English, uses Indianized English to portray Indian situations. He

chose to write the poem in non-standard form of English i.e. Gujarati brand of English. His use of Indian English for satirizing Indian voices and their points of view sounds a socio-political act.

Many linguists have been trying to trace the grammatical and structural rules of Indian English. Many scholars including Nissim Ezekiel viewed Indian English as a degraded version of English. Aforementioned linguistic deviations in 'Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T S' do exemplify this. They disrupt reader's linguistic schemata. An interaction of grammar and lexis of the poem with the reader's schemata of Standard English results in schema change. These deviations create a number of effects for a reader who is open to them. These deviations from standard English which are the characteristics of Indian English signify dialectal variety of English. It shows Indians' way of acquiring skills of English through native language. And the culture laden expressions such as 'dear sister', 'external sweetness and internal sweetness', etc. exemplify this. These deviations facilitate changes in schemata and represent change in theme. These linguistic choices directly change the theme. They show semi-educated Indians' struggle to speak in English and an influence of vernacular expressions. 'This poem like 'A Very Indian Poem in English' and 'The Railway Clerk', illustrates many of the features of the English spoken by a particular class of people in India' (Ramamurti : 127)

In the poem graphological deviation takes place through lack of capitalization of letters at the beginning of lines and line breaks. It changes reader's schemata as reader's existing schemata expects capitalization at the beginning of every line as per the poetic conventions. Nissim Ezekiel uses colloquial language in other poems as well for satirizing Indian culture. It is his conscious decision to keep it colloquial. Throughout the poem colloquial style is used. It sounds unpoetic as the colloquial speech does not go with poetic style. And the use of the phrase 'bon voyage' in colloquial style is deviant leading to schema disruption

The poem portrays the situation of a farewell party in an Indian fashion. Reader's schema of farewell party will expect all positive things to be spoken about the person in whose honour farewell party is arranged. But in the poem the speaker is indulged in showcasing his good manners and etiquette. There is digression in the poem. The speaker's focus changes from Miss Pushpa to himself and his acquaintances. All this goes against the situational schemata of a reader leading to schema refreshment. Thus deviant language and text structure affects world schema and results in schema refreshment.

5. CONCLUSION:

In a nutshell, various types of linguistic deviations in the poem go against reader's prior knowledge of standard English posing schematic challenge. Prototypical schematic expectations of a reader are violated. Deviant language and text structure in the poem poses cognitive challenge to the reader and affects his / her world schemata. Thus schematic foregrounding leads to cognitive defamiliarisation and results in schema refreshment.

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