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Lexical level Linguistic Deviations in the Selected Poetry of Lord, Alfred Tennyson

Abstract

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, the Poet Laureate of Great Britain during the reign of Queen Victoria's in 1850 is one of the most popular British poets of his time. His deviant and striking choice of words to emphasize his intended meanings is really insightful. Present paper aims at pointing out the significant features of lexical deviations that are brought about by giving a new insight into the way Tennyson has used language in literature at the level of structure in his poetry. Comprehension of language largely depends upon lexis: the total stock of words available in a language for use and choice of words that are made by a poet for purposeful use of words. To use a language properly a poet is required to have learnt and understood a vocabulary and a set of rules describing how the items of a vocabulary are to be used in constructing sentences. In order to understand and learn the language of a poet properly we must go for style study which is the study of the use of language in literature by a particular poet or writer. It conducts the scientific study of any literary work by applying syntactic rules accurately on it and thus we can understand the creative use of language in literature even if deviant use of any literary devices is made by any literary artist to create desired literary effects on readers.

Keywords:lexical, Deviation, Syntax, Obtrusive, Comprehension

Introduction

Comprehension of language and construction of a sentence largely depends upon lexis (choice of words) and grammatical rule as.....to know a language completely a poet is required to have learnt and understood a vocabulary and a set of rules describing how the items of a vocabulary are to be used in constructing sentences. These lexical and grammatical aspects together comprise the form of the language. (Leech, 1988: 37) In order to understand and learn the use of a language efficiently one must go for style study which is the study of the use of language in literature by a particular poet or writer. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, the

Poet Laureate of Great Britain during the reign of Queen Victoria's in 1850 is one of the most popular British poets of his time. His striking and obtrusive use of words to emphasize his intended meanings is really insightful. It is all about the choices between various syntactical resources of a language Tennyson has made in his poetry. Present paper aims at pointing out the significant features of linguistic deviations that are brought about by giving a new insight into the way language through words works in literature at the level of structure in Tennyson's poetry.

Literature Review

In ancient times style is treated as the proper adornment of thoughts. The poet or writer is expected to frame his ideas with the help of model sentences and prescribed kinds of "figures" suitable to his mode of discourse. The traditional idea of style as something properly added to thoughts contrasts with the ideas that derive from Charles Bally (1865-1947), the Swiss philologist, and Leo Spitzer (1887-1960), the Austrian literary critic. According to followers of these thinkers, style in language arises from the possibility of choice among alternative forms of expression, as for example, between 'children', 'kids', 'youngsters', and 'youths', each of which has a different evocative value. Modern stylistics uses the tools of formal linguistic analysis coupled with the methods of literary criticism; its goal is to try to segregate characteristic uses and functions of language and rhetoric rather than advance normative or prescriptive rules and patterns. Style study conducts the scientific study of any literary work by applying the syntactic rules accurately on it and thus we understand the precise intended use of language in literature even if deviant use of any literary devices is made by any literary artist to create desired literary effects on readers.

Lexical Deviations in the poetry of Tennyson

In fact on the lexical level all manner of effects are achieved by the means of lexical selections and word-play. The selection of words depends on several factors like the tenor of discourse, the type of poet or the goal aimed at, the types of audience a poet has in his mind or targeted, the texture or quality of his work, and so on. Secondly every genre drama, fiction, poetry or non-literary works etc. determines the diction in that work. In so far as it is believed that poetry cannot be written without violation of language, a good poem will always show variation of the rules of using words in poetry. Tennyson is well known for his lexical inventions for perhaps he might found it the readiest way to express the desired feelings or opinions. Tennyson has the genius for binding words to assume new connotation by coining

new words (neologism), affixation, inflexional affixes, functional conversion (zero affixation), repetition, synonymy and collocation etc.

Nonce- Formation

Invention of new words is one of the most obvious ways in which Tennyson has exceeded the normal resources of the language. Words coined thus for a single occasion as no other poet could use them are called 'nonce-formation' (Rajimwale, 2007:213) and we find plenty of such words in Tennyson. The most set norm of word-formation is affixation: use of prefix, suffix, inflexional affix and zero affixation (functional conversion) to a root word. On the level of structure in Tennyson's poetry every word he has selected is important for what it actually says not for the vague poetic associations and suggestiveness. See these examples:

- a) All in the blue unclouded weather..... (The Lady of Shalott, 91)
- b) Who dares foreshadow for an only son..... (Dedication-Idylls of the king, 28)
- c) A miserable and unkind, untrue,
unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me! (MorteD'Arthur, 119)
- f.) Unloved, the sunflower, shining fair, (In Memoriam, CI, 5)
- g.) I see their unborn faces shine..... (In Memoriam, LXXXIV, 19)

A more correct explanation of 'violation of lexical rules' is that the rules of word formation are applied with greater generality than customary. The rule in fact is limited to a particular group of words and cannot be applied freely. Tennyson has used this rule freely in its application without even noticing the oddity of its use in words like 'foreshadow', 'unasked', 'unwoo'd' 'unclouded', 'unknightly', 'unloved' and 'unborn'. These words are not just words but the encapsulation of newly formulated ideas or concept making faculty of Tennyson through affixation.

There is another, one more if rather illusive factor which may be called the 'concept making power' of neologism through affixation which can be discovered in the following examples from Tennyson's poetic language: See this example:

- h.) "The sequel of to-day unsoldiers all..... (MorteD'Arthur, 14)

Here in this example we find an unexpected use of the word ‘unsoldiers’, where the class of the word is noun of ‘soldier’ then is made verb and antonym by adding ‘s’ and ‘un’ as ‘unsoldiers’ which Tennyson has coined for our surprise with the use of affixation.

Compounding

Compounding is the process of creating compound words as words made up of two or more free morphemes to produce a new lexical word.....however, the compound as a single word has an independent entity. See these examples:

i.) She broke out in praise

To God, that help'd her in her widowhood. (Dora, 111)

j.) But that was in her earlier maidenhood.... (The Holy Grail, 73)

k.) And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland (The Lotos Eaters, 39)

l.) And move me to my marriage-morn (Move Eastward, Happy Earth, 11)

m.) A miserable and unkind, untrue,unknightly, traitor-hearted!

Woe is me! (MorteD'Arthur, 119)

n.) To thy widow'd marriage-pillows, to the.... (Locksley Hall, 82)

Tennyson opens a new world of compound words in his poetry when we come across the words like ‘noonday’, ‘widowhood’, ‘fatherland’, ‘maidenhood’, ‘marriage-morn’, ‘traitor-hearted’ and ‘marriage-pillows’ and these compound words are remarkably used unlike ‘childhood’, ‘motherland’, ‘kindhearted’ and ‘Sunday-morning’ and strike us as a surprising extension of the expressive possibilities of language because each word is important for what it actually says not for the vague poetic occasion and suggestiveness.

Functional Conversion

Another major linguistic device whereby Tennyson uses words in a new unfamiliar way is ‘functional conversion’. A linguistic device of extending the vocabulary of especial importance in English is ‘functional conversion’, which might be better described as ‘zero affixation’. Functional conversion, according to Geoffrey N. Leech (1988:43), ‘consists in adapting an item to a grammatical function without changing its form.’ Like affixation and compounding Tennyson has shown great reliance on functional conversion also as one of the

most interesting linguistic techniques of word formation. This can be viewed in the following examples:

o.) O, the child too clothes the father with a dearness not his due. (Locksley Hall, 91)

p.) Sometimes the linnet piped his song; (Sir Launcelot and Queem Guinevere, 10)

q.) And I have sinn'd, for it was all through me (Dora, 58)

r.) He works his work, I mine (Ulysses, 43)

s.) I earth in earth forget these empty courts, (Tithounus, 75)

t.) And dream my dream, and hold it true; (In Memoriam, 10)

u.) Yet we twain Had never kiss'd a kiss or vow'd a vow. (The Holy Grail, 582)

v.) To pestle a poison'd poison behind his crimson lights. (Maud, Part-I, 44)

We find that different choices and selections of lexical items (words) by Tennyson usually aim at creating cohesion in poetry and 'lexical repetition is a direct form of lexical cohesion in which the repeated items bridge the gap either within or across the sentence by reinforcing the dominant sense in the discourse. (Leech, 1988:43) See a typical example of 'lexical repetition' by Tennyson:

w.) Than had we never sworn. I swear no more.

x.) I swore to the great king, and am foresworn. (The Last Tournament, 655)

In this example Tennyson's use of the word 'swear' and its inflectional variants 'sworn', 'swore' and 'foresworn' that occur in a regularity in the expression thickens the semantic significance by referring backward and forward in a quick and skillful evolving web of relations.

Conclusion

This study is necessarily selective but a glance at these examples from Tennyson's poetry would induce anyone that the word-formation has become extremely convenient for Tennyson because it helps him to express his utmost thoughts in an effortless manner. Tennyson's use of lexical deviations leaves a special poetic effect on readers' mind because words that are used are identical yet different in their function because of their evocative qualities. In Tennyson's poetic language there appears to be no end to the functional

conversion, compound words and affixal chain formation even. As a matter of fact, affixes have become such an important mechanics of stylistic word creation in Tennyson's poetry that it has become difficult to have any sort of description without resorting to them which results in indicating the immense resourcefulness of English language with which Tennyson has expressed his utmost feelings and thoughts successfully.

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