



A STYLISTIC STUDY OF SELECTED POEMS OF HAIKU POETRY

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Abstract:

The present paper aims to study the Japanese Haiku poetry from a stylistic perspective. To show the stylistic devices employed by Haiku poets, some selected poems from the poetry of Haiku masters, Basho, Buson and so on. To achieve the aims of the study, eleven poems of Japanese Haiku have been qualitative analyzed in terms of a stylistic framework. The findings of analysis revealed that some Stylistic devices are found by the analysis of Haiku poems. One highly used device is foregrounding or the deviant of structures by means of repetition, fronting and metaphor. Repetition is expressed in Haiku poetry on the syntactic level by means of repeating the same syntactic structures, the lexical level by repetition of the same words, and on the phonological level by repetition of the same consonant sounds (alliteration), and the same vowel sounds (assonance).

1. Introduction:

Stylistics is a branch of linguistics which studies the characteristics of situationally-distinctive uses of language, with particular reference to literary language and tries to establish principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individuals and social groups in the use of language. (Thornborrow and Wareing, 1998:3). In literature, especially poetry, stylistic devices are highly used in to give an additional and/or supplemental meaning, idea, or feeling. Also known as figures of speech or rhetorical devices, the goal of these techniques is to create imagery, emphasis, or clarity within a text in hopes of engaging the reader. One kind of poetry is Haiku poetry. A haiku is traditionally a Japanese poem consisting of three short lines that do not rhyme. The origins of haiku poems can be traced back as far as the 9th century. A haiku must have contrasting imagery – juxtaposition – and make reference to the season, known as kigo. It is considered to be more than a type of poem; it is a way of looking at the physical world and seeing something deeper, like the very nature of existence. It should leave the reader with a strong feeling or impression. The most famous Haiku poets are Matsuo Basho, Yosa Buson, Kobayashi Issa, Natsume Sōseki and Masaoka Shiki. As such, this study aims to reveal the stylistic features and devices used in haiku poems focusing on the levels of syntax, phonology, foregrounding and text cohesion. It is hypothesized that haiku poems are concentrated and concise kind of genre in which many fragments of sentence are foregrounded and it makes use of several stylistic devices such as assonance, fronting and ellipsis.

2. A Brief Introduction to Haiku Poetry:

Haiku is a form of poetry, first made popular in Japan, which has become appreciated around the world. It is defined as "a Japanese verse form consisting of seventeen syllables in three lines of five, seven and five syllables" (Cuddon, 2013:323). Lynch (cited in Murphy, 1998: 117) defines Haiku as a short, imagistic poem expressing a moment keenly perceived linking nature, often in a seasonal context, with human nature. A haiku poem, expresses a single idea, image or feeling and it is a kind of miniature 'snap' in words. It was first established as a form in the 16th c. Originally it was called a hokku (haiku, the current term, is 19th c.) and was the opening verse in a linked sequence or renga. Many Japanese poets have used the form, but two were especially gifted: namely, Bashō (pseudonym of Matsuo Munefusa, 1644–94); and Kobayashi Issa (pseudonym of Kobayashi Nobuyuki, 1763–1828). (Cuddon, ibid)

In content, a traditional haiku portrays nature and usually contains a kigo or "season-word," a conventional shorthand indication of the season in which the poem is set. Yasuda (1973:59) states that this kind of poetry is very concise that it can be comfortably spoken in a single breath. This is because of the omission of unnecessary words which add nothing to the meaning and to ellipsis from which the suggestive power of the haiku comes. Japanese Haiku has some characteristics that distinguish it from other types of poetry. One of them, according to Yasuda (1957:64) is avoiding metaphors, similes, and personification. Other characteristics, as cited in Yosif (2009), are as follows:

- Simplicity of language and structure is the first feature of haiku.
- Concentration: Haiku poetry is highly concise and to the point.
- Haiku poetry reflects nature though it is not poetry of nature. It is especially interested in nature for the transience, fleeting and suggestive quality of nature.
- Haiku poetry is not interested in war or in any sort of violence.
- Haiku poetry is masculine rather than feminine. It is written by men and supposedly for men.
- Haiku is based on experience, especially an aesthetic experience in nature which mounts to the level of illumination or a moment of mystical revelation.

- Any haiku should not include more than three images which should be concrete images from real life. The third image illuminates the previous two.
- Haiku poetry should be quick and direct.
- Haiku poetry speaks of common things with a common language to reveal uncommon ideas.
- A haiku poem is visual rather than aural; it uses visual rather than auditory images. This brings haiku closer to painting; the haiku poem is a painting in words instead of lines and colors.

3. Stylistics:

Jeffries and McIntyre (2010:1) define stylistics as the linguistic study of style in language. It aims to account for how texts project meaning, how readers construct meaning and why readers respond to texts in the way that they do. Likewise, Widdowson (1975: 4-7) points out that stylistics is the study of literary style from a linguistic orientation. He indicates that literature has captured the attention of linguists for a long period since it represents the data that can be accounted for in terms of linguistic description to show its effective use of language and its patterns (cited in Al-Hindawi and Al-Khazaali, 2017: 108). In addition, Short (1996:2) sees stylistics as "an approach to the analysis of literary texts using linguistic expression"(ibid).

3.1 Stylistic Analysis:

Niazi and Gautam (2010:44) point that stylistic analysis in linguistics refers to the identification patterns of usage in speech and writing, so the analysis of the text in the domain of stylistics covers variant levels. These levels include, grammatical, lexical, syntactic, discourse, prosodic, semantic, pragmatic and phonology levels. (cited in Al-Hindawi and Al-Khazaali, 2017: 111). Khattak et al (2012: 98) assert that stylistic analysis has two main objectives: first, to enable the readers to make a meaningful interpretation of the text itself; second, to expand knowledge and awareness of the language in general. Stylistic analysis also has the advantage of illustrating how particular linguistic forms function to convey specific messages. In a similar vein, stylistic analysis is considered as a normal part of literary studies. It is practiced as a part of understanding the possible meanings in a text. Hence, analysis is done by identifying certain stylistic devices and their impact on the text.

3.1.1 Lexical Analysis:

The lexical level of analysis studies the choice of particular lexical items in a text, their distribution in relation to one another, and their meanings. It aims at identifying and determining quality and meaning in the text. Here the analysis is focusing on repetition and collocation of words on the lexical level.

3.1.2 Syntactic Analysis:

Syntactic analysis is concerned with basic concepts of sentence structure and how they apply in the analysis of sentences and constituent parts. In the analysis of syntax, Simple, compound and complex sentences must be considered. Moreover, Syntactic parallelism which refers to the repetition of syntactically similar constructions of co-ordinated sentences or phrases, e.g. Time is passing, Johnny Walker is coming (Bussmann, 1996:859). In addition, the employment of contrasted sentences may contribute to the stylistic consistency of texts; and creates unique segmental meanings within the scope of the text.

3.1.3 Cohesion:

Cohesion refers to the way sentences combine into text by means of text-internal ties (Norgaard, 2010:54). Cohesion has been greatly influential in stylistics as well as in linguistics more generally. On the lexical level, synonyms, repetition, and collocations are used to achieve cohesion within the text. On the grammatical level, ellipsis is used to reduce redundancy by leaving out superfluous information, i.e. information which can easily be recovered from the situation or the context. (Wekker and Haegeman 1985: 154). Elliptical sentences depend for their interpretation on what precedes them in discourse. Ellipsis involves subject deletion, such as John sat down and (he) told us the news; Verb gapping: (a verb may be omitted if it is identical with a preceding verb) as in the example:

John was eating cornflakes and Mary was eating porridge.

John was eating cornflakes and Mary ----- porridge

Ellipsis also involves backward gapping, as in:

John liked, and Mary disliked, the film about Gandhi

On the phonological level, cohesion consists of Alliteration, Assonance, and Rhyme. Alliteration "is a stylistic device consisting of the repetition of the same consonant sound in nearby words. To qualify as alliteration, in the strict sense of the word, the consonant sounds must occur in word-initial position" (Norgaard, 2010:49). Watson (2001:227) states that the principal function of alliteration is cohesive in nature, binding together the components of line, strophe, stanza, or poem. Such cohesion, in fact, is the effect of word-initial alliteration. Alliteration is also can be employed for emphasis and mnemonic effects. Assonance is a term that refers to the repetition of clusters of similar vowel sounds within individual lines and across sequences of lines (Bradford, 1997:15). It is also used for cohesion and harmony in the text. As for Rhyme, it stands for the repetition of the phonemic sound of a single syllable at the end of a line (Bradford: ibid).

3.1.4. Foregrounding:

Foregrounding is “a form of textual patterning which is motivated specifically for literary-aesthetic purposes” (Simpson, 2004: 51). Simpson (ibid) states that foregrounding is typically a stylistic strategy. It involves a stylistic distortion of some sort, either through an aspect of the text which deviates from a linguistic norm or, alternatively, where an aspect of the text is brought to the force through repetition or parallelism. Foregrounding is essentially a technique for ‘making strange’ in language, or to extrapolate from Shklovsky’s Russian term *ostranenie*, a method of ‘defamiliarization’ in textual composition. Foregrounding is mainly achieved by its use of literary devices or figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, onomatopoeia, repetition, alliteration, etc.

Foregrounding is also achieved by syntactic deviation such as fronting. Fronting is an operation which moves elements generally occupying the position to the right of the finite verb clause such as adjectives, past participants and adverbs to the position immediately preceding it in clauses with a subject gap. (Ohkado, 2010: 255). Pearce (2007: 71) defines fronting as “the movement of clausal material which normally occurs after the verb in initial position (also Known as ‘preposing’). He (ibid) also states that there are several types of fronting: (1) Fronted object: This I perceive plainly. (2) Fronted adverbial: Far sitting on my right was Graham Manely. (3) Fronted subject complement: Even better is the possibility of testing things out. (4) Fronted main verb: But Change they did, quite radically. Fronting has a variety of functions in discourse, especially in the maintenance of cohesion. It can be used to organize the flow of information in a text, express contrast, and give emphasis to particular elements. In particular, fronting serves as a device to make non-subject elements the theme of the sentence.

4. Methodology, Data Analysis and Results:

This section is devoted to the method of analysis and the data analysis. Eleven haiku poems have been selected to be the data of scrutiny. These poems are qualitatively analyzed in the light of the theoretical framework of stylistics reviewed above. (1)

A falling flower, thought I,
Flutterig back to the branch -
was a butterfly

(By Moritake, in: Yasuda, 1957)

The name of this poem is “A butterfly” and it is written by Moritake. The first line of the stanza is foregrounded by the use of fronting in which the verb ‘though’ is fronted against the subject ‘I’ to maintain the cohesion and to make the flow smoothly. The repetition of the two fs in the first line of the poem, together with the initial of the second line, forms an alliteration that links the first line with the second in a harmonic way. The repetition of the f sound in the second line helps the first line to flow into the rest of the verse, making a connection with the new rhythm that follows it, which is the b alliteration in “back” and “branch”. In the same way, b is repeated in “behold” to bind the third line with previous lines. Then the writer returns to the previous rhythm by connecting the b alliteration with the f one. Thus the alliteration is used here as the glue that links the sentences together and hence the cohesion is achieved. Another stylistic device used in this stanza is ellipsis. In the third line of the stanza, the pronoun “it” is omitted to show how this line is related to the first line. Such uses of ellipsis, as indicated by Simpson (2004: 83), “produce a fast-paced flow of sometimes fragmentary or partial thoughts as they enter the consciousness of a character or narrator”. Rhyme is also used by Moritake at the end of the first and third lines to show the unity and consistency of the poem. By achieving unity, this rhyme works hand in hand with the other features of the poem and to achieve rhythm for the poem. (2)

This morning sun.
The bright sun shines
Sardine heads

(By Buson In: Persinger, 2013)

In this stanza s of ‘sun’ coupled with those of ‘shine’ and ‘sardine’ and are used to describe a beautiful summer day. The sequences of Ss in the initial positions of words form an initial alliteration. This simple initial alliteration is used to unify the whole poem. Sentence Fragments control the whole stanza. Sentence fragments are intended here to create a sense of simplicity and enhance closeness between the writer and the reader allowing the reader to imagine or complete the sentences that are incomplete. (3)

The old pond
A frog jumps in -
Plop

(By Basho In Sher, 2008)

This poem is one of the most famous poems in Japanese Haiku written by Basho. This poem, like any other Haiku poem, is characterized by fronting the elements of the sentence. The complement of the sentence “the old pond” is moved to initial position to create a deviation in sentence structure which is a prominent feature in Haiku. In addition, the onomatopoeic word ‘Plop’ which sound like the sound of jumping in the water

is used to provide a better and more complete picture of the situation. It helps the reader to imagine and to live in the context that the poet is describing. (4)

The spring sea swells and falls, and swells-
Until the bell of tardy evening knells

(By Buson, In Prseinger, 2013)

One of the stylistic devices used in Yosa's poem above is the ellipsis in the first sentence. Instead of saying "the spring sea swells and it falls and it swells" the poet prefers to omit the pronouns to give the poem more aesthetic and cohesive aspects. The omission of pronouns might indicate that the poet wants to emphasize what is happening rather than emphasizing on the sea itself. This emphasis can be shown by the use of polysyndeton (the addition of conjunctions to the series of verbs) exemplified by "and,..., and,..." which is used to give more emphasis to every verb that follows the conjunction. Additionally, rhyming words "swells" and "knells" to give unity, emphasis and musical effect to the poem. (5)

Looking around,
gazing intently, beholding:
Autumn in Suma

(Basho In: Barnhill, 2004)

This poem is one of Basho's poems. This poem is stylistically cohesive. The stylistic texture is formed by means of sentence fragments in which the sentences are left incomplete. The cohesion of the sentences is also achieved by means of lexical ties of synonymy in the form of the verbs looking and gazing. These stylistic devices are interwoven with another stylistic device which is assonance. Assonance is represented in the words "Autumn" and "Suma" in which the vowel sounds are repeated in the same place in the word. (6)

River mists that float
On the wind, look soft and light
From the loading-boat.

(By Soin, in Yasuda, 1957)

The poem above has the "River Mists". It is written by the Japanese poet Soin. The text is unified and its items are linked by the utilization of parallelism of structures that are expressed by the near synonyms 'soft' and 'light'. Rhythm is also created in the text by means of using rhyming sounds at the end of the words 'float,' 'light,' and 'boat'. These are all combined to express the unity of thoughts which is, in turn, giving the sentence harmony and makes it memorable. (7)

Here are there plum blossoms
Falling in the south
Falling in the north

(By Basho in Sher, 2008)

Basho tries to make the poem effective by employing a combination of stylistic strategies. One of these strategies is alliteration that is formed by the use of consonance in the word 'plum' and 'blossoms' in which the l sound is repeated in the same middle place. This strategy is intermingled with another strategy used in the second and third lines, that is the Parallelism of structures where the same structures are repeated on the syntactic level as well as the lexical level. Consequently, the parallelism structure is more strengthened by the use of antithesis or contrast in the words 'south' and 'north'. In the same times, the final two lines are tied by the use of consonance where the consonant sound 'th' is repeated at the end of the final words in each line. (8)

In the heart of town
Willows growing at the inn
Bend their branches down.

(By Rigyu In Yasuda, 1957)

Rigyu's Weeping Willows poem is initiated via the employment of metaphor in the sentence 'the heart of the town' in which the word heart is used metaphorically to refer to the center of the town. The use of metaphor achieved parallelism. In addition, the first sentence is a kind fragment since it is an incomplete sentence used as a complete sentence. The poet uses this deliberate fragment for a specific purpose which might mean that he wants to emphasize on that specific place in the town (the heart of the town). Moreover, there is another kind of foregrounding parallelism that is actualized by the employment of parallel lexical items 'town, inn and down'. (9)

Wild the rolling sea!
Over which to Sado Isle
Lies the Galaxy.

(By Basho In Yasuda, 1957)

The Galaxy is one of Basho's poems. Stylistically, this poem relies heavily on deviation of the structures or foregrounding by means of fronting. Fronting is shown in the adjective 'wild' that is moved from its normal place after the noun phrase to initial position before the noun phrase. Similarly, the verb in the last

sentence is delayed. Fronting and delaying elements are used to create dramatic effects and to give emphasis to some words in the poem. (10)

A flash of lightning;
through the darkness goes
the cry of a night heron

(By Basho In Sher, 2008)

This poem can be analyzed stylistically as having various stylistic devices that hold the elements in the poem together. Foregrounding devices are used. These devices include antonyms/ antithesis cohesive strategies represented in the words 'lightening' and 'darkness' along with cohesive strategies of synonyms 'darkness' and 'night'. Another foregrounding device is employed, postponement, and this can be seen in the verb 'goes' that is postponed after the adverbial phrase to give it further focus and to give the poem harmonious effects. (11)

Spring Morning Season of spring days!
There a nameless hill has Veils
Of soft morning haze

(By Basho In Yasuda, 1957)

This poem is highly relying on the use of alliteration that is formed in the first consonant sounds in 'spring,' 'season,' and 'soft' through the whole poem linking its parts together. This is supported by another stylistic device of foregrounding parallelism achieved by the repetition of words 'spring' and 'morning'. In addition, the poem is unified by the employment of rhyme represented by the final sound in the words 'days,' 'veils,' and 'haze' through the poem

5. Conclusion:

Some Stylistic devices are found by the analysis of Haiku poems. One highly used device is foregrounding or the deviant of structures by means of repetition, fronting and metaphor. Repetition is expressed in Haiku poetry on the syntactic level by means of repeating the same syntactic structures, the lexical level by repetition of the same words, and on the phonological level by repetition of the same consonant sounds (alliteration), and the same vowel sounds (assonance). Although metaphor is avoided in Haiku poetry, a metaphor is found "the heart of the town". Rhyme is also used in Haiku to enhance cohesion. Parallelism is created in the texts by using contrastive words (antithesis) and by using synonyms. All these stylistic strategies contribute to the harmony, smoothness, simplicity and cohesion of the Haiku.

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