

Some Rhetoric Figures in English Literary Discourse

Ayten SEYİDOVA*

ABSTRACT

The Paper, as part of the study dealing with the intentional selection, systematic patterning and implementation of some rhetoric figures with respect to topic, situation, function, author's intention and content of a literary discourse, focuses on the linguistic devices expressing not only the literal meaning of discourse; it also throws light on the contextualized attitude and evaluation of the author of a specific aesthetic function. Being elements of an extra-linguistic category, evaluation, warning, concession or consensus, confession and antithesis serve to characterize a thing or phenomena from a specific point of view. Although the attitudinal horizons of these elements vary from context to context, the author can "control his/her attitudes by deeper exposure to the situation, what, in the end, enables us to specify each attitudinal meaning as the interplay and integration of the semantic representation with context-dependent properties of the discourse.

Keywords: *rhetoric figures, concession, consensus, evaluation, antithesis, opposite meaning*

Edebi İngilizce Söylemde Bazı Retorik Figürler

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, bilinçli seçim, sistematik şekillendirme ve bazı retorik figürleri konu, fonksiyon ve yazarın maksadı bakımından ele almaktadır. Çalışma sadece dilbilimsel araçları ifade etmeyi değil aynı zamanda belli bir konuda yazarın tutumu ve metinsel davranışa da ışık tutmaktadır. Ekstra dilbilim kategorisi olarak kabul edilen uyarı, kabul veya uzlaşma, itiraf ve anti tez gibi olayları karakterize eden dilbilimsel öğeler belli bir bakış açısından incelenmektedir. Bu tür davranış unsurları metinden metine farklılık göstermelerine rağmen yazar, davranışını her durumda kontrol edebilmektedir. Söylem bağımlı kontekstleri anlamamızda davranışsal ve semantik temsili anlama imkânı vermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *belagat figürleri, imtiyaz, uzlaşma, değerlendirme, antitez, karşıt anlam*

Introduction

Recent discussions have shown the necessity to differentiate the phenomena that have been subsumed under the notion of rhetoric figures. Being one of the active "atomic elements" of the system of the rhetoric figures, the so-called "opinion figures" usually serve to reflect the speaker's view point by means of various types of antithesis, questions and addressings, gradation, contrast and even pausings. In interpersonal communication the opinion figures are of considerable importance in adopting or expressing a particular attitude, typically for just effect. No mutual relationship can be of simplistic nature, since effectiveness of an human intercourse is closely connected with the psychological and cognitive levels of communicants if to lay aside the other social-interactive factors. As some scholars claim, "there is an attractive and commonsensical explanation of the foregoing facts..."¹ According to Rousseau, language is originally metaphorical and it derives this from its mother, passion. In this

* *Azərbaycan Dövlət Universiteti, Yabancı Diller Birimi, Bakü/Azərbaycan. seyidli.ayten@hotmail.com*

¹ Lycan, W.G., *Philosophy of Language*. Routledge: London and New York, 2007

sense, metaphor is the characteristic that relates language to its origin². In this context, the central argument of this paper is that analysis of the role of opinion figures in discourse must be defined functionally rather structurally, since the construction of discourse is above all the construction of a conceptual discourse space. Consistent with this perspective, figures of speech represent analogically based world knowledge and lexico-grammatical encoding digitizes this conceptual output in the formulation stage. This paper tries to show that without “opinion figures” the language of the literary images would be rather “dry”, ineffectual and apathetic. e.g. a wordless pause, sometimes can stand for the context-dependent meaning of a whole sentence, but in all such cases, it functions in consonant with the semantics of the whole text. In the ancient Greece, these features of figures of speech were also seen mainly as an effort to create speech. The founder of the linguistic emotionalistic conception Charles Bally strongly believed that each particular component of linguistic information combines a part of language and a part of a man who interprets or announces the information³

Assumptions

Our limited intention, accordingly, is to constantly emphasize and explore the linguostylistic aspects of the opinion figures in particular utterances as well as identify their contextually and situationally bound functions, the aspects of which can be characterized as involving the following theoretical assumptions:

- (a) Linguistic meaning is opposed to ontological (cognitive) content as a structure typical for and determined by language, not by human cognition as such:
- (b) Linguistic meaning is regarded as a “function” of the language system and its structures, while the cognitive notions (and even structures) are universal and the extralinguistic content depends on the actual use of such notions (and structure – e.g. utterances of the same sentence can differ in their content) in a discourse of this or that other type.
- (c) Individual parts of linguistic or literary structure are always to be understood from the point of view of a complex structure because in a literary work all components (i.e. language, content, composition) are closely inter-related and overlapping within structure.

Discussion

Our approach, based on these assumptions, allows us to claim that the role and contribution of various rhetoric figures in creating such rhetoric functions as evaluation, concession, antithesis etc. can hardly be possible without distinguishing between linguistic meaning and cognitive content. Accordingly, the domain called semantics (or semantico-pragmatics) covers not only the relationship between meanings and surface forms and the correspondence of language units to “objects”, “events” etc. It also involves the relationship between language, its use and its users – not only in the sense of “user – oriented” linguistics, but also the relations between

² Derrida, J. (1976). *Of Grammatology* (Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak). The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London

³ Missikova, G., *Linguistic Stylistics*. Filozofická Fakulta. Univerzita Konstantina Filozofa: Nitra, 2003

language and cognition, including even the structure of human memory⁴. For instance, in “Experience is a good school, but the fees are high” (Heinrich Heine), the literal “primary subject” (or “tenor”) is expressed in terms of the “secondary subject (or “vehicle”) of “school”. The basis in resemblance suggests that each figurative element in a literary discourse acquires and displays a certain rhetoric value.

The hypertheme of the text sets a rhetoric figure into action, which, in turn, having performed its function, “returns” to normal again. “Opinion games” here is understood as “a tactic of various opinion devices”. e.g. Gradation or climax is interpreted as “an arrangement of sentences (or of the homogeneous parts of one sentence) which secures a gradual increase in significance, importance, or emotional tension in the utterance”⁵. As for COD, climax in rhetoric means “a sequence of propositions or ideas in order of increasing importance, force or effectiveness of expression”. For WNTCD⁶, climax is “a series of ideas or events arranged or occurring progressively so that the most forceful is last”.

e.g. The order of the underlined propositions in “It was a lovely city, a beautiful city, a fair city, a veritable gem of a city” is based on the increasing emotional tension “subjectively” produced by emotive words “lovely”, beautiful”, and “fair”, with “ a veritable gem of a city” proposition ranking the highest among the synonymous structures with emotive meaning.

Logical and quantitative increases in significance are the other two ways of the gradation.

In all these cases the explanatory context helps the reader to grasp the gradation (as “veritable” [gem of a city]), by means of which the author discloses his world outlook, his evaluation of objective facts and phenomena as well as impresses upon the reader dynamically changing/increasing significance of the things. The suggested rhetoric process is nothing but a result of an interaction of the denotative meaning and the factor(s) due to which each successive unit is perceived as stronger than the preceding one. So any strengthened meaning arises on the basis of the denotative meaning. Such kind of “opinion games” are far commoner for antitheses, evolution of which is based on setting of one point of sharp contrast against the other. The rhetoric power of antitheses arises out of the context through the expansion of objectively contrasting pairs⁷. Structurally antithesis is generally moulded in parallel constructions, its basic functions (rhythm forming, connecting notions which are linked together, disseverance, and comparison) often go together but one of these functions is, as a rule, displayed more clearly than the others. e.g

Youth is lovely, age is lonely,

Youth is fiery, age is frosty (Longfellow).

Here the objectively contrasted pair is “youth” and “age” while “lovely” and “lonely” can display antonymical features only being drawn into the contrasting “youth” and “age”. Taken out of this context, they can hardly express objectively

⁴ Sgall, P. (1978). “Meaning, Content and Pragmatics”. In: Prague Studies in Mathematical Linguistics. 6. Praha: 215-222.

⁵ Galperin, I.R., *Stylistics*. Moscow “Higher School”, 1977

⁶ Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary. 2nd Edition. Simon and Schuster: New York, 1983

⁷ Galperin, I.R., *Stylistics*. Moscow “Higher School”, 1977

opposite concepts. “Lovely” and “lonely” have been used here as an opinion game to individualize “youth” and “age” more strikingly.

The major types of “games” “played” on the ideas suggested in a literary work are the position of the author, evaluation, warning, consensus or concession and antithesis.

The position of the author or an image, as a derivative, is “unloaded” from interpersonal relations. “Maturing” of a plot takes place either due to softening or increasing of the interimage tension, or even its escalating to a higher antagonistic scale, because no literary discourse can exist and be effectively constructed avoiding these processes. The author’s opinion shows itself in two ways: (a) as the self—position of the author, and (b) the reflexion of each images’ position in interpersonal relations of the discourse. In the former case, the author’s participation is direct and open, while the latter case prefers the so-called “indirect interference” of the author, whose presence is verified by the contribution of some or all the images. In novels and poems the author is more active. But in dramatic plays, he is usually behind the images. The author’s position in literary discourse consists of the following processes:

Evaluation: Directly or indirectly praising somebody, the author lightens his/her mood, gives him/her internal confidence and moral support. Praising itself can intend two purposes: inspiration and evaluation. Approval or praising usually awakes an unexpected flood of satisfaction towards something or somebody. Author’s position is evaluated in the context of ideological tendencies of the society: he specifies the place and contributions of his hero through identifying his positive and negative sides and finally, creates the image of the world in front of the reader. Any literary work is targeted at “curing” some social disease. Society, in turn, consists of definite parties and social groups and the author can hardly remain indifferent to such kind of stratification and finds it reasonable to show his attitude to the (in)justice or (im)morality, which is nothing but “a child” of violation of public decency. It is just this factor that makes the author hide himself behind his hero and praise him, on the one hand, or criticize the images opposite to his hero, on the other . e.g.

But on this night the old man, his beret pulled forward, was still sitting at the table with his map when the door opened and Kharkov, the Russian journalist came in with two other Russians in civilian clothes, leather coats and caps. The corporal of the guard closed the door reluctantly behind them. Kharkov had been the first responsible man he had been able to communicate with. “Tovarish Marty”, said Kharkov in his politely disdainful hisping voice and smiled, showing his bad teeth.

Mary stood up. He did not like Kharkov, but Kharkov, coming from “Pravda” and in direct communication with Stalin, was at this moment one of the three most important men in Spain⁸

Warning: Warning is one of the interactional manners; it, in fact, is viewed as both

⁸ Hemingway, E., *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. New York, 1945

means of accomplishing social interaction and of managing mental activity through giving a moral support to the counterpart's opinion. Warning is informative in nature; the speaker also uses this figure to advise someone not to do something because it may have dangerous or unpleasant results; or to tell someone about something so they know it will happen. Literary discourse benefits from this stylistic device, particularly in the speech of the central images. And more to the point, warning can function as a factor that makes a situation (in the plot) develop in a different way by intensifying the dramatizm so that a dialogic speech full of such kind of rhetorical figures produces an impressive effect.

Advice, threatening and making someone remember something that they must (not) do as features of warning best illustrate themselves in the following examples.

- 1) Maria said, "Do not speak. It is better if we do not speak"⁹
- 2) "Ignacio!" he said. "Put the gun on the shoulder of the boy". "Thou"! to Joacin. "Sit there and do not move. Crouch over. More. No. More" (ibid: 283)
- 3) You could take the pistol out of the drawer and hold it. "Handle it freely", was Grandfather's expression. "But you could not play with it because it was a serious weapon" (Ibid: 297).

Concession or consensus is a special form of agreement or reconciliation in the sphere of social interactions as well as intergroup or interpersonal relations; here two beliefs, facts, etc. that are opposed to each other become friendly by allowing a special right to a particular person or group of people to end an argument or a disagreement so that this or that intergroup conflict gets weaker; the obstacles between them are removed or made milder which finally provides both sides with better chances in coming to mutual understanding. This rhetoric figure is also met in the other discourse types e.g. in the court the judge, to show his objectivity as well as to prove his justness and devotion to the law, is usually prepared to make concessions on some issues raised by the attorneys/defenders of the convicts. Concession is widely used both in the speech of the author and the images of the literary discourse. Concession usually needs an adequate step from the opponent and, in fact, it makes the opposed side act so. Thus, concession is assumed to function as a means of peacemaking, instigation as well as disciplining in social interactions. E.g.

"Estoy Listo", Robert Jordan said. "I am ready to do it. Since you are all decided that it should be done, it is a service that I can do ("I am ready")."

A Spanish expression, is an indicator of how Robert Jordan (he is English) gives his consent, though unwillingly, to some concessions, but for definite purposes. Concession is a concept with mental and moral-aesthetic values. Images are the carriers of these values. Concession is an acceptance of the reality either on the basis of relevant arguments or a definite rhetoric factor. Being different from concession rhetoric confession should also be distinguished from confession as a general notion. Rhetoric confession is a special device usually used to make a deep impression on the audience in social contexts; it decreases the tension by diminishing the distance

⁹ Hemingway, ibid.(334)

between communicants, creates a favorable atmosphere in drawing socio-political groups nearer to each other while in a literary discourse it displays the characteristic features of the image, and as a rhetoric device, it functions as an effective factor in the hands of the author. The rhetoric confession is a means immensely contributing to consensus, general understanding and reducing interpersonal tension. The following example strikingly demonstrates these features:

“I’m not religious”, he said. “But I will say to our fathers and to Haven Martys that I should catch this fish, and I promise to make a pilgrimage to the Virgin de Cobre if I catch him. That is a promise”.¹⁰

The hero has obtained an internal consensus with himself and the major goal here is to catch the fish. As for the example below, it serves quite a different purpose: An hour after her arrival she received a very kind letter from the Governor’s wife asking her to go and have tea with her. She went. She found Mrs. Hanney alone, but in a minute the Governor joined them. He expressed his regret that she was leaving and told her how sorry he was for the course.

“It is very kind of you to say that”, said Anne, smiling gaily “but you must not think I take it to heart. I am entirely on Alban’s side. I think what he did was absolutely right and if you do not mind my saying so I think you have treated them most unjustly”.

“Believe me, I hated having to take the step I took”. “Don’t let us talk about it”, said Anne.¹¹

The series of confessions here are rather helpful in smoothing over the interpersonal tension.

Antithesis occupies a special place among the rhetoric figures. The term has derived from Greek “antitithenai”, made of “anti”- against and “tithenai”-to place, set. Antithesis, as a device bordering between stylistics and logic, is also widely used in mathematics. In linguistics, it denotes “an opposition or contrast of thoughts, usually in two words, phrases, clauses or sentences” (e.g. “The prodigal robs his heir, the miser robs himself”), while in mathematics it is used to turn one of the elements of equation into a notion contradicting with that expressed by its other element. For Galperin, antithesis is based on relative opposition which arises out of the context through the expansion of objectively contrasting pairs, as in:

Excess of ceremony shows want of breeding.

Here the contrasted pair “excess” and “want” cannot be used as objectively opposed concepts, but in combination with “ceremony” and “breeding”, they display certain features which may be considered as antonymical. In the opinion of some linguists, it is essential to distinguish between antithesis and what is termed “contrast”¹². In identification of antithesis, not only the semantic aspect, but the structural pattern also plays an important role, so that the antagonistic features of the two objects are more easily perceived when they are used in parallel or similar structures. Parallelism of structures leads to making the meanings of the contrasted pair more impressive. Although rhythm forming, copulative, disjunctive and

¹⁰ Hemingway, E., *The Old Man and The Sea*. New York, 1952

¹¹ Maugham, S. (1951). *Collected Short Stories*. V.1.

¹² Galperin, I.R (1977). *Stylistics*. Moscow “Higher School”.

comparative meanings of antithesis often go together, in each case one of them functions more clearly than the others. Antithesis in parallel or similar structures with opposed pairs can also be created asyndetically or by the adversative conjunctions “and” and “but”. e.g. the following four lines from Shakespeare’s “A Madrigal” display both syndetic and asyndetic combination of contrasted pairs where the comparative function is predominant.

Youth is nimble, age is lame:
 Youth is hot and bold,
 Age is weak and cold,
 Youth is wild, and age is tame...

The examples below also illustrate how “and-” and “but-” type combinations of the contrasted antithetical constructions are set one against the other:

- 1) The iridescent bubbles were beautiful. But they were the falsest thing in the sea and the old man loved to see the big sea turtles eating them¹³
- 2) One horseman was ahead and three rode behind¹⁴

Hamlet’s famous antithetical monolog “To be or not to be” contains a different structure and has been composed by means of conjunction “or”. Though “or” is usually used to link alternatives, in this monolog, it has preserved its Middle English meaning “other”, which, in turn, had superseded old English “oththe”. The alternatively used affirmative and negative forms of “be” denote context-dependent meanings “to live/to die” or “to exist/to disappear”, which, as a question, suggests a possibility/choice between life and death to show that these possibilities are antagonistic and he could choose only one of them.

Sometimes, it is difficult to distinguish the antithetic elements from logical opposition, as the following examples show:

How beyond refuge I am thine. Ah me!
 I am not thine. I am a part of thee.¹⁵

The two parts of the second line are made into one “contrast” both structurally and semantically, the latter, in fact, resulting from the opposing view of the lover to the idea (“I am not thine”) expressed in the first part of the line. What the lover has inferred from his experience is: I am a part of thine.

Conclusion

1. Antithesis, as a stylistic opposition, is based on the contrasting features of two antonyms by setting their properties against each other; such kind of antithetical oppositions are widely spread in poetics.
2. The relative or context-dependent opposition arises through the expansion of objectively contrasting pairs;

¹³ Hemingway, *ibid*

¹⁴ Hemingway, E., *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. New York, 1945

¹⁵ *The Works of P.B. Shelley*, Wordsworth Editions Limited: Great Britain, 1994

3. Parallelism of antithetic structuration leads to an economic use of these sequences. Reduction of definite elements makes the style more dynamic and impressive.
4. Any antithetical relation is based on semantic contradiction, which can also be expressed in a "chainy manner".

References

- DERRIDA, J. (1976). *Of Grammatology* (Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak). The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London
- GALPERIN, I.R. (1977). *Stylistics*. Moscow "Higher School".
- HEMINGWAY, E. (1945). *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. New York.
- HEMINGWAY, E. (1952). *The Old Man and The Sea*. New York.
- LYCAN, W.G. (2007). *Philosophy of Language*. Routledge: London and New York
- MÍŠŤIKOVA, G. (2003) *Linguistic Stylistics*. Filozofická Fakulta. Univerzita Konstantina Filozofa: Nitra
- THE Complete Works of Shakespeare (1994). Great Britain. London
- SGALL, P. (1978). "Meaning, Content and Pragmatics". In: *Prague Studies in Mathematical Linguistics*. 6. Praha: 215-222.
- WEBSTER'S New Twentieth Century Dictionary (1983). 2nd Edition. Simon and Schuster: New York.
- THE Works of P.B. Shelley (1994). Wordsworth Editions Limited: Great Britain
- MAUGHAM, S. (1951). *Collected Short Stories*. V.1.