Stylistics Analysis Of The Theory Of Foregroundingin E. E. Cumming’s Poem My Father Moved Through Dooms Of Love

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Abstract

This study explores the nature of the foregrounding and investigates the different levels of foregrounding, morphology, graphology, lexical, syntactic, semantic and parallelism deviation in E.E Cumming’s poem ‘my father moved through dooms of love’. However, the poet tried to explain the relation between the deviated forms that have been aesthetically used in the poem and the meaning behind these forms. Accordingly, the poet’s style gathered between the linguistics and literary criticism and aesthetic features as well. He used the foregrounding or deviation as especially characteristic of his poetic language so he deviated from expected norms of linguistic expressions.

Introduction

E. E Commings (1864-1962) has been considered as one of the prominent poets in the experimental poetry in twentieth century. American literature. He wrote around 2900 poems, two autobiographical novels, four plays and several essays, as well as many drawings and paintings throughout his life. He has his own technique of writing poetry and has special style in tackling language in his own way. It is hypothesized that Cumming’s technique of writing is unique and this is shown through the use of foregrounding through all the levels of language. This paper aims at showing how Cummings used all levels of foregrounding to elevate the theme of his poem “my father moved through dooms of love”.

1. Theoretical Background

In stylistics, the concept of foregrounding that is originated from the Prague School of Linguistics, and it is used by Leech and Short (1981: 48) to refer to ‘artistically motivated deviation’. The term foregrounding has its origin with the Czech theorist Jan Mukarovský. It refers to the range of stylistic effects that occur in literature, whether at the phonetic level (e.g., alliteration, rhyme), morphological level (e.g., word formation) the grammatical level (e.g., inversion, ellipsis), or the semantic level (e.g., metaphor, irony).

One of the prominent pioneers of the Prague linguist circle was, Jan Mukarovsky, the first to formulate the notion of foregrounding, in his famous article ‘standard article” standard language and poetic language”, he (1970) demonstrates that foregrounding is the opposite of automatization, that is the deautomatization of an act, the more an act is automatized the less consciously executed, the more it is foregrounded, the more completely conscious does it become. Automatization refers to the common use of linguistic devices which does not attract particular attention by the language decoder, for example, the use of discourse markers (e.g. well, you know, sort of, kind of) in spontaneous spoken conversations. Automatization thus relates with the usual background pattern, or the norm, in language use—it encircles those forms and structures that competent language users expect to be used in a given context of situation so therefore, foregrounded linguistic devices, on the other hand, are usually not expected to be used in a specific context and are thus considered conspicuous—they catch the language decoder’s attention (e.g. the use of old-fashioned and/or very formal words such as epicure, improvident, and whither in spontaneous spoken conversations).

The Prague School of poetics has distinguished the ‘poetic function’ of language by its foregrounding or deautomatisation of the linguistic code. This means that the aesthetic exploitation of language takes the form of surprising a reader into a fresh awareness of, and sensitivity to, the linguistic medium which is normally taken for granted as an ‘automatised’ background of communication. As the Joyce example shows, this foregrounding
is not limited to the more obvious poetic devices, such as metaphor and alliteration. It may take the form of denying the normally expected clues of context and coherence (Leech & Short, 2007).

According to Simpson, 1997, the term of Foregrounding is developed by the Russian Formalists and Prague school structuralists which refers to any linguistic feature (at any level of language) whose prominence in a text is motivated for literary purposes. Foregrounded items are ‘defamiliarised’ in that they deviate from the established background patterns of language in a text.

It can be said that the notion of Foregrounding is usually used in art. It’s a very general principle of artistic communication that a work of art in some way deviates from norms which we, as members of society, have learnt to expect in the medium used and that anyone who wishes to investigate the significance and value of a work of art must concentrate on the element of interest and surprise, rather than on the automatic pattern. Such deviations from linguistic or other socially accepted norms are labeled foregrounding, which invokes the analogy of a figure seen against a background (Leech, 1968: 57).

Foregrounding or motivated deviation from linguistic, or other socially accepted norms, has been claimed to be a basic principle of aesthetic communication. Whether or not the concept is applicable to any great extent to other art forms, it is certainly valuable, if not essential, for the study of poetic language. The norms of the language are in this dimension of analysis regarded as a ‘background’, against which features which are prominent because of their abnormality are placed in focus. In making choices which are not permissible in terms of the accepted code, the poet extends, or transcends, the normal communicative resources of the tongue. The obvious illustration of foregrounding comes from the semantic opposition of literal and figurative meaning; a literary metaphor is a semantic oddity which demands that a linguistic form should be given something other than its normal (literal) interpretation (Leech, 2008, P:30).

The theory of foregrounding is probably the most important theory within stylistic analysis, and foregrounding analysis is arguably the most important part of the stylistic analysis in poetry. Foregrounding thus captures deviations from the norm. It is obvious that what is considered as automatized and foregrounded language use depends on the communication situation at hand. Formally, foregrounding is a deviation, or departure, from what is expected in the linguistic code or the social code expressed through language; functionally, it is a special effect or significance conveyed by that departure. (Leech, 2008, P:3)

So the study of foregrounding and its interpretation is likely to be a better guide to the aesthetic function of language than the study of stylistic variants (Leech & Short, 2007: 32).

In the foregrounding model, stylistic value has a slightly different meaning from that which it has in the ‘stylistic variants’ model: it refers to the special act of interpretation which we make in order to make sense of what would otherwise appear strange and unmotivated. (Leech & Short, 2007: 111)

In addition, The foregrounding proposes the figure/ground opposition of gestalt psychology in which the patterns of normal language are relevant to literary art only in providing a ‘background’ for the structured deployment of deviations from the norm. If the gestalt metaphor is retained, the word ‘figures’ of ‘figures of speech’ is reanimated by a technical pun (Leech, 1969: 18).

In Halliday’s language, it is called Prominence. It involves two techniques: Parallel Foregrounding and Deviational Foregrounding, parallelism is the study of revised similar patterns in a text while deviation is the violation of apparent patterns. Deautomatization and Thematization belong to deviational foregrounding. Deautomatization is the exploration of abnormal, hocking and unexpected features of a text. In thematization, initial position of sentence is highlighted.

2. Classification of Foregrounding

Leech (1969) states that foregrounding can be achieved by a variety of means which have been largely grouped under two main types:

- Deviations and Repetition or Paradigmatic and syntagmatic foregrounding
- Paradigmatic, which constitutes a disruption of normal pattern of linguistic organization.
- Schematic, the normal function of language are undisturbed, and the total linguistic event is meaningful even if deviation is unmotivated.
In fact, there is an important characterization of foregrounding in stylistics analysis is that the primary, secondary and tertiary deviation, (Leech, 2008)

i. Primary deviation takes two forms:
(a) Where the language allows a choice, the poet goes outside the normally occurring range of choice; and
(b) Where the language allows a choice, the poet denies himself the freedom to choose, using the same item in successive positions. We find it in lexical and collocational deviation.

ii. Secondary deviation is deviation not from norms of linguistic expression in general, but from norms of literary composition, of the ‘poetic canon’ including norms of author or genre. This can also be called conventional deviation or defeated expectancy. Examples are:
(a) metrical variation is deviation from the metrical ‘set’.
(b) enjambment (or ‘run-on lines’), a lack of fit between metrical and syntactic units, such that a line end occurs at a point where there is no major grammatical boundary.

iii. Tertiary deviation is deviation from norms internal to a text, and is for this reason also termed internal deviation (see Levin 1965). Like secondary deviation, it is a kind of defeated expectancy: a frustration of expectations which have been established in the poem itself.

3. Discussion
In fact, in E.E. Cumming poetry, there are three main levels of poetic language the reader should know in order to understand the language of the literary work as well as to analyses the linguistics deviation. The following levels are The realization (phonology and graphology), form (morphology, grammar and lexicon) and semantic (denotative and connotative meaning). (Leech, 1969; 37)

In this section, we are primarily concerned with the analysis of foregrounding models the poet aesthetically used.

4.1. Morphological foregrounding
The lowest unit of syntactic organization is the word so therefore, morphemes are the building blocks for words as in (bookshelf) for example, consists of two morphemes, book and shelf. These are free morpheme because they can stand freely as words. There are bound morphemes like ‘unclean’ represented in the negation marker ‘un’. It cannot stand alone.

One way to produce deviation at morphological level is by adding an affixation to a word it would not normally be added to. As the following:

In the first stanza, the poet used the morphologically deviated forms as in

“through sames of am through haves of give,”
The inflectional (s) plural’ is added to the adjective (same) as well as it is added to the verb (have). The verb (give) is used in based form in noun position, it should be attached with bound morpheme (ing).

In the tenth & eleventh stanza, the bound morpheme (ing) is added to the proper nouns.

“septembering arms of year extend”
“proudly and (by octobering flame)”

In the thirteenth stanza, the inflectional morpheme (s) plural is added to the pronoun ‘they’

“My father moved through thevs of we.”

In fourteenth stanza, the inflectional morpheme (ed) past is added to the modal ‘will’

“scheming imagine, passion willed.”

4.2. Phonological foregrounding
It is the deviation in sound or pronunciation which is done deliberately in regard to preserving the rhyme, as when the noun’ wind’ is pronounced like the verb wind. Leech considers the phonological deviation as irregularities of pronunciation.

The phonological deviation is associated with the social class. All phonetic behavior is determined by individual and social needs. Sometimes deviation from normal use of sounds or mispronunciation of sounds may be the result of habit.

He used ‘alliteration’ in the following stanzas, as in:

In the second stanza, ‘under his eyes would stir and squirm’
In the forth stanza, ‘my father’s fingers brought her sleep:’
In the eighth stanza, ‘no cripple wouldn’t creep one mile’
In the fifteenth stanza, ‘to differ a disease of same’
In the sixteenth stanza, ‘maggoty minus and dumb death’
Graphology, describes the general resources of language’s written system, including punctuation, spelling, typography, alphabet and paragraph structure, but it can also be extended to incorporate any significant pictorial and iconic devices which supplement this system (Simpson, 1997, p:25) (Leech 1969, p69), the graphological features in a text which strike our mind at first sight. They play major role in analyzing the text before noticing lexical and grammatical features.

The following graphological features including (capitalization, punctuation) the poet used them as follows:

In second stanza, Use brackets (so timid air is firm). Here Punctuation is deviated.

In third stanza,at the beginning, he used a small letter(newly) as well as used the noun “april” in a small letter

At the end of the following stanzas, Fourth, eighth and twelfth, semicolon (:) is used.

In Last one, Starting stanza with ‘hyphen’

Also starting with the first person pronoun with small letter

4.4. Lexical foregrounding

The most obvious example of lexical deviation is neologism is the invention of new ‘words’ (i.e. items of vocabulary) is one of the more obvious ways in which a poet may exceed the normal resources of the language, a word is considered to be a nonce-formation, if it is made up for the nonce, i.e for a single occasion and another aspect of lexical deviation is the functional conversion. It is the process of converting a word from grammatical class to another. (Leech, 1969:42).

In the first stanza, the verb (give) is used after ‘of’ as a noun, so its lexical category is converted. Also, the word (sames) is neologism. It is a new word introduced into language.

In the fifth stanza, the verb (begin) is used in noun position.

In the tenth stanza, the word (septembering) is used as neologism .

In the fourteenth stanza, the word (willed) is used as neologism.

In the sixteenth stanza, the auxiliary (am) is used in noun position.

2.5 Semantic Foregrounding

According to Leech (1969), it is reasonable to translate sematic deviation mentally into ‘non-sense’ or ‘absurdity’

Semantically, the poetplays with the parts of speech. He uses some verbs to be, verbs to do, demonstratives and interrogatories as nouns. He uses modes of "was", "is", "did" and "am" and changes their parts of speech converting them into abstractions. Their meanings become ethically and ontologically problematic for modern poets

Semantic deviation deals with what Leech (1969), calls as ‘tropes foregrounded irregularities of content’. He states that they are classified into three sections:

4.5.1 Semantic oddity

Means semantic peculiarity or strangeness of expressions, such as the following:

i. Oxymorn, means ‘ juxtaposing elements that appear to be contradictory’ e.g random order, open secret, same difference.

In the first stanza, "depths of height”,

In fifth stanza, ”griefs of joy”

ii. Paradox, means a statement that apparently contradicts itself and yet might be true. e.g. They have semantic absurdity that contains self-conflicting information (Leech,1969).
In the first stanza,
"my father moved through dooms of love
Through sames of am through haves of give
my father moved through depths of height.
Here, it is a contradicted idea, "haves of give’ and depths of height’"

4.5.2. Transfer of meaning
It is classified into three tropes of figurative language:

i. Synecdoche, is a figure of speech in which a term for a part of something refers to the whole of something, or vice versa. e.g. referring to the workers as hired hands.

In tenth stanza, a part of his body refers to the whole body that is called Synecdoche.
"his shoulders marched against the dark."

ii. Metaphor, is a figure of speech that identifies one thing as being the same as some unrelated other thing.
He used metaphor in the following selections from the poem.
In the third stanza, "floats the first who, his april touch”, comparing him with spring.
In the fifth stanza, "’s praising a forehead called the moon”
In the thirteenth stanza, "singing each new leaf out of each tree’
'‘danced when she heard my father sing)’
In the fourteenth stanza, "’freedom a drug that’s bought and sold’’

iii. and Simile, a figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind, use to make a description more emphatic or vivid. 'my love is like red red rose. (Leech, 1969):
He used ‘Simile’ in the following stanzas,
In the seventh stanza, "’keen as midsummer’s keen beyond’’
In the ninth stanza,
His anger was as right as rain.
His pity was as green as grain.
In the last stanza, "’and nothing quite so least as truth’’

4.5.3. Honest of Deception
It is one kind of trope’ Hyperbole ‘the figure of over-statement’
He used ‘hyperbole’ in forth stanza, "’for he could feel the mountains grow.’’
The concept of semantic foregrounding is closely associated with the term dependency i.e figurative meanings which implies that an item has been given a referential meaning outside its normal range of meanings is expressed by some kind of formal deviation.
Semantic foregrounding can be signaled by deviant collocation:

Collocation crash: which related to semantic incompatibility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stanza</th>
<th>Collocation clash</th>
<th>Syntactic structure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>haves of give</td>
<td>N + P+N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>sleeping selves</td>
<td>V + N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>Lifting the valleys of the see griefs of joy Singing desire</td>
<td>V+N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>a heart of star</td>
<td>The wrists of twilight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenth</td>
<td>Septembering arms</td>
<td>V+N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleventh</td>
<td>His shoulders marched</td>
<td>N+V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifteenth</td>
<td>a disease of same</td>
<td>N+P+N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sixteenth | Maggoty minus | Dumb death | Adj+N

4.6. Syntactic or Grammatical Foregrounding
In order to distinguish the grammatical deviation, meaning that we start with the line traditionally drawn between morphology (the grammar of the word) and syntax (the grammar of how words pattern within sentences).

In the first stanza, he used the auxiliary (am) after the preposition (of) as in (through same of am) so it should have been ‘me’ instead of (am) and also used the base verb (give) after the preposition (of) as in through haves of give, so the verb ‘give’ must be ended with ‘ing’ form.

In the fourth stanza, used the quantifier (some) as a verb followed the modal ‘(should)’ and also he used the verb ‘sleep’ as noun as in ‘brought her sleep’

In the fifth stanza, he used the base verb (give) after the preposition (into) as in: ‘desire into begin’

In the seventh stanza, he used the modal (must) and (should) after ‘of’ as in: ‘Scorning the Pomp of must and shall’ and also used the verb ‘feel’ after (of) as noun ‘through dooms of feel’

In the thirteenth stanza, the subject pronoun (we) is used in object or noun position, (My father moved through theys of we)

In the fourteenth stanza, he used the nonhuman relative pronoun ‘which’ with human noun ‘men’ then let men kill which cannot share

In the fifteenth stanza, he used the adjective ‘same’ as noun after ‘of’ as in ‘to differ a disease of same’ also used the auxiliary ‘am’ after the preposition (of) as in ‘conform the pinnacle of am’

In the sixteenth stanza, he used ‘the past plural auxiliary verb ‘were’ with singular noun ‘dull’ as in ‘dull were’

4.7. Parallelism
Linguistics deviation as we have studied it is not the only mechanism of linguistic foregrounding, this type of foregrounding which is in a sense the opposite of deviation since it consists in the introduction of extra regularities, not irregularities, into the language. (Leech, 1969, p: 62)

Accordingly, It is considered that parallelism is a massive persuasive tool. Its repetitive quality makes the sentence or sentences, and phrase or phrases symmetrical so it is therefore very memorable for the reader. Any poet’s idea will be made easier for readers to process by parallelism because they sense a pattern and know what to expect.

It has already been noted that the poet used lexico – syntactic Parallelism’ in the following stanzas as in:

In the first stanza, ‘’through same of am through haves of give,’’

In the sixth stanza,

‘’Joy was his song and joy so pure’’

‘’and pure so now and now so yes’’

In the eighth stanza, ‘’his flesh was flesh his blood was blood:’’

4. Conclusion
It has been concluded that the poem involves different levels of foregrounding, so the more a work of art is being foregrounded, the more it will be interesting and creative. The poet used this technique in order to communicate something significant in respect of his father’s life and also the poet try to express his own feeling towards his father as well as the poet felt that it is significant for readers to enrich his poem with such levels of foregrounding.

The poet used more the levels of form (grammar and morphology) and semantic (denotative and connotative meaning) than realization level (phonology and graphology).

In addition, the poem is filled with contrasted ideas that makes the reader interested in analyzing what is behind in all these contrasts or deviations so the poet presented the poem as an artistic and aesthetic work.

In fact we concluded that the theory of foregrounding is the most important theory within stylistic analysis of any literary text because it makes the poetic language and writer’s style more motivated, creative and interesting.

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