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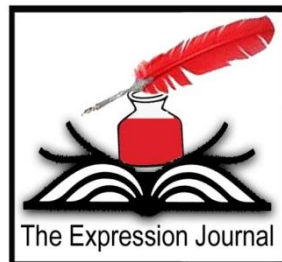
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## **DICKENS' STYLISTIC DEVICES AND SPECIALTIES**

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### **Abstract**

Language played pivotal role in literature as in everyday life; language expressed the themes of literary works. It was noted that this study fell within the framework of stylistic criticism. Language is a major factor in the classification of the novel according to region. Linguists define Stylistic Analysis in numerous ways, and a certain amount of terminological confusion exists as a result of these varied, often conflicting definitions. However, in the present study, the narrowest, most restrictive approach possible has been adopted, accounting for and analyzing only those devices that all linguists would agree upon. The analysis essentially corresponds to the one proposed by Leech (1969) in which the stylistic devices have a relative construction defining a variable whose value is specified by the foregrounded linguistic elements. Since Leech's three Levels of Language does indeed connect the 'what' with the 'how', the taxonomy can be used any number of ways in the English Literature (EL).

### **Keywords**

Language, Discourse, Speech Variations, Graphology, Morphology, Lexis, Paralangue, Recursion, Incursion, Onomatopoeia, Rhythm, Modifiers,



## DICKENS' STYLISTIC DEVICES AND SPECIALTIES

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### INTRODUCTION

#### Stylistics and Style:

Stylistics and style have been variously defined by different scholars. G.W. Turner affirms: "stylistics is that part of linguistics which concentrates on variation in the use of language, often, but not exclusively with special attention to the most conscious and complex uses of language in literature" (*Stylistics* 7). David Crystal, however, says, "stylistics refers to the study of the literary expression of a community, using linguistic methods" (*Linguistics* 252). Derek Davy and David Crystal explain this branch of learning as follows:

that the aim of stylistics is to analyze language habits with the main purpose of identifying, from the general mass of linguistic features common to English as used on every conceivable occasion, those features which are restricted to certain kinds of social context; to explain where possible, why such features have been used, as opposed to other alternatives; and to classify these features into categories based upon a view of their function in the social context (*Investigating English Style* 10).

An elucidation from M.A.K. Halliday, A. McIntosh and P.D. Strevens states that it is: "linguistic form in inter-relation with literary form." (*The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching* 97) On the basis of the view of experts on the subject we can say that stylistics deals with variation in the use of language; it can also be concerned with the speech habits of a community; from the general mass of linguistic features a few can be selected that are used in certain social contexts. Stylistics can also point out why these have been used to the exclusion of other variables, and then to classify

them according to their use in appropriate conditions. In spite of language differences, certain linguistic features are found throughout the globe.

A stylistic study must identify these features, and classify them. Besides, stylistics or style is the cumulative effect of a thought in language; or a study of the statistical frequency in which certain linguistic items occur. Donald C Freeman states that stylistics can be of the following kinds: "style as deviation from the norm, style as recurrence or convergence of textural patterns, and style as a particular exploitation of possibilities." (*Linguistics and Literary Style* 4) We can say that in style is considered what is possible; it also includes a study of the recurrence or frequency of textural designs and any deviation from the norm.

Since stylistics deals with language, it would not be out of place to say a few words about the nature of language.

### **Language:**

At different periods of its history, different linguists have been impressed by different aspects of language. Gleason defines: "the term language when used in any linguistic qualification should be reserved exclusively for vocal language, that is communication by means of speech." (*An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics* 408) Edward Sapir says: "Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntary produced symbols." (*Language* 8) Jean Meilstorm: "A language is a structural system, a set of behavioral habits by which the inhabitants of a particular community interact, as such it is an integral part of this community's total cultural pattern of behaviour" ("Linguistic Atlas Findings versus Text Book Pronouncement on Current American Usage" *Readings in Applied English Linguistics* 316).

### **Potter Affirms:**

"A language may be defined as a system of arbitrary or conventional vocal symbols by means of which human beings communicate and cooperate with one another" (*Language in the Modern World* 48). Very different on the interpretation of language was Leonard (by) language, one is able to understand an infinite number of expressions that are new to one's experience, that bear no simple physical resemblance and are in no simple way analogues to the expressions that constitute one's linguistic experience; and one is able, with greater or less facility, to produce such expressions on an appropriate occasion, despite their novelty and independently of detectable stimulus configurations, and to be understood by others who share this still mysterious ability (*Language and Mind* 100). Chomsky's definition is rather complex in that new features in relation to languages are taken up by him and generalizations derived there from. Neil Smith and Deidre Wilson argue that language: "has its own principles and rules" (*Modern Linguistics* 32). This is too naïve and simplistic interpretation of language.

### **Discourse and Utterances:**

Hymes states that in speech three components are present — speaker, hearer and something spoken about "Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Life" (*Directions in Sociolinguistics* 58). A definition of discourse and utterance would be pertinent as these terms occur frequently in relation to any analysis of language. "Discourse is linguistic communication seen as a transaction between speaker and hearer, as an interpersonal activity whose form is determined by its social purpose" (Hymes 58). Thus discourse is speech activity that takes place between participants. "In speaking we produce sequences of meaningful sound conventionally known as utterance" (Leech and Short, *Style in Fiction* 209).

### **The English Stylists:**

English literature is famous for its stylists. Swift, Dryden, Addison, Johnson, Thackeray, Lamb, Hazlitt, Carlyle, Ruskin, Huxley, Shaw, Wells, Chesterton, Orwell, Conrad, Henry James, Joyce and Maugham — to cite a few. They are some of the great masters of prose, each testifying to a true style which is unique and individual.

### **The Style of Dickens:**

Applying the same standards to Dickens' works we see that they boast of high merits. F. R. Leavis says:

The final stress may fall on Dickens' command of word, phrase, rhythm and image: in ease and range there is surely no greater master of English except Shakespeare. This comes back to saying that Dickens is a great poet: his endless resource in felicitously varied expression is an extraordinary responsiveness to life. (*The Great Tradition* 281)

Since Dickens is one of the greatest masters of English prose, his style needs careful analysis as taken up below. In stylistics a piece of text should be studied at a number of levels – each level dealing with one aspect of the organization of language. The levels may be classified into "phonetic/ graphetic, phonological/ graphological, grammatical, lexical and semantic" (Davy and Crystal, *Investigating English Style* 15). It is said by another critic "that differences in language can occur at the phonological, grammatical, syntactic, and vocabulary dimensions" (*Linguistic Changes in Present Day English* 17).

### **Phonetics:**

"Phonetics studies the characteristics and potential utility of human vocal noise" (Davy and Crystal 16). And, "phonology studies the sound system of a given language" (18). Thus, while phonetics studies the sound systems of the human vocal sound, phonology restricts the study to a particular language; in this case to English, with reference to the works of Dickens.

### **Speech Variation:**

The occurrence of metathesis is found in the speech of Dickens' characters. Otto Jespersen has defined metathesis, "The simplest and most frequently occurring cases in which the order for a sound is issued too early or too late are those transpositions of two sounds which the linguistics term

"metathesis" (*Language, Its Nature, Development and Origin* 280-281). A few examples of metathesis used by Dickens' characters are given below: "pervoked" equivalent to "provoked" of standard English. (*TPP*, p.739) or: "afeerd" equivalent to "afraid" of standard English. (*TPP*, p.582)

## **Graphology:**

The written analogue of phonology as said earlier, is revealed in rhythm, intonation, punctuation, and spacing: "the graphology of the text, its complex of distinctive features in layout, script or print, is an aspect of its register, meaning the communicative purpose for which it is designed and the language considered appropriate to that purpose." (Walter Nash, *Designs in Prose* 2). Dickens employs various graphological designs for different purposes, as shown below:

Dashes between words depict the jerky speech of Mr. Micawber conveying emotional stress:

"Until I have - blown to fragments-the —a-detestable-serpent- Heep! partake of no one's hospitality, until I have-a- moved Mount Vesuviusto- eruption- on —a- the abandoned rascal — Heep! Refreshment — a- underneath the roof- particularly punch — would — a- choke me- unless- I had- previously-choked the eyes — out of the head — a- of- interminable cheat, and liar -- Heep" (*DC* 649)

## **Morphology:**

It is said that stylistics should study the internal structure of words, or classes of words known as morphology, and their external relationship, known as syntax. Grammar subsumes morphology and syntax.

In some speeches of Dickens' characters the morph C- est' indicative of superlative degree, is added to certain adjectives on the grounds of analogy, as indicated below:

"cunningest" (*NN* 412)

Again "— er" morph is added to certain adjectives on the grounds of analogy, as indicated below: "worsen" (*TPP* 180)

Some morphs are used as pause-fillers in the speech of Dickens' characters. An example is as follows: "Aha" (*NN* 653)

## **Lexis (Vocabulary):**

Vocabulary is a study of idiomatic word sequences, as well as single words. (David Davy and Crystal David, *Investigating English Style*, 1969, p.18). It is a formal and a notional concept, as it is very difficult to discuss words without references to their semantic parts. Micawber's florid speech has words rare and uncommon — words and phrases that have an air of erudition. It is said Micawber's speech was modeled after Dickens' father who had a penchant for the use of flowery language. Given below is one specimen: "salubrity" (*DC* 378)

Even his phrases are highly bookish, as indicated below:

"accumulative force of a combination of circumstances?" (*DC* .678)

Or "stipendiary emoluments appertaining to my engagement" (*DC* 648)

Richard Swiveller is another character who loves to show-off his learning by using poetic lines and florid words, examples of which are listed below, "My best affections have experienced this night a stifler."(TOCS 118)

### **Paralanguae:**

Paralanguae, as associated with language, is described, "Speech does not take place in a vacuum but is surrounded, as it were, by patterned bodily motions — the kinesis system — and by systematically analyzable vocalizations or paralanguae" ('The Teacher and the Modern World of Language' *Readings in Applied English Linguistics* 368). Or, in other words, speech is attended by bodily movements, known as the kinesis system, and by vocalizations known as paralanguae. Paralanguae or tone of a voice can be a powerful means of communication.

### **Linkage:**

Thus it is obvious that speech is linked. Nash says, "Consecutive utterances are as a rule situational or symbolically linked — meaning that the connection between one utterance and the next is either implicit in the situation itself or is overtly demonstrated by some element in language — a lexical allusion, a grammatical connective etc." (Nash 66). It is in linkage between speech acts that discourse design lies; it is also important for it lays bare the coherence of discourse, and reflects social and personal relationship.

### **Rejoinder:**

Given above is an instance of a speaker who is not allowing the hearer to speak. On the other hand a participant may give a bald reply to the preceding utterance, without attempting to share in the development of the discourse. Such statements are against the conventions of speech; the respondent answering in this way may be thought to be ill-mannered, if not rude. Nash gives the term "rejoinder" to such a non-committal reply (72).

### **Recursion:**

In some interactions, "the partners keep alluding back to earlier remarks, whether in puzzlement, or mere inanity, or because their discourse is a process of linguistic gesture without real communication" (Nash 72). Recursion, as this phenomenon is called is usually manifested in 'symbolic linkage'. In *Bleak House* old Miss Flite scantily living with her caged birds and caged hopes, through a symbolically rich speech passage reverts to the mention of 'judgment'. In variance with Nash's views on 'recursion', this speech of the victim of judiciary is redolent of acute distress.

### **Incursion:**

We like to think that when we participate in a conversation, the subject is shifted occasionally, that our conversation moves towards some goal, and information is safely conveyed. The name given to such a speech pattern is incursion. "There is accepted technique for shifting the subject or moving the conversation along a little." (Nash 73).

**Adjacency Pairs:** Sacks and Schegloff observe that a conversation is a string of at least two turns, some turns being more closely related than others; these Sacks calls "adjacency pairs". They are two utterances long, different participants are involved, and the utterances are ordered — the first pair part being followed by the second pair part. If the first part is spoken, the second is expected for example: Hi there/ Hello. (Schegloff and Sacks, "Opening Up Closings" *Semiotica*, 1973, pp.295-298). Given below are a few examples from Dickens' novels:

"Good- bye, sir," Brass.  
"Good-bye, sir," dwarf (*TOCS*, p.571)  
Or "Good -- night, Kit," Nell.  
"Good-night, Miss Nell" (*TOCS*, p.51)

### **Incoherence:**

Edmondson (1981, p.165) speaks of another speech aspect – "incoherence". In Dickens' novels we find such an example, the speaker under acute stress. It is given below:

"No, Copperfield! – No communication - a- until – Miss Wickfield — a -- redress from wrongs inflicted by consummate scoundrel – Heep! Inviolable secret – a - from the whole world – a – no exceptions – this day week – a – at breakfast time – a – everybody present – including aunt – a – and extremely friendly gentleman – to be at the hotel at Canterbury..." (*DC* 649)

### **Cohesion:**

"Cohesion occurs when the INTERPRETATION of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one PRESUPPOSES the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it." (Halliday and Hassan, *Cohesion in English* 4). D. Thakur says, "the sentence is not only a constitute but also a constituent. It is held that the links between sentences can be described not only in terms of semantics but also in terms of grammatical features." ("Inter-sentence Links in English" *journal of Linguistic Society in India* 154)

### **Inversion:**

The question of word order arises if there is more than one word. The normal word order is Subject — Predicate; the other kind of word order is 'Predicate — Subject', and 'Predicate — Subject — Predicate', where the Predicate is split into two parts. The 'Predicate — Subject', and 'Predicate — Subject — Predicate' combine is the inverted order. (Zandvoort, *A Handbook of English Grammar* 236).

### **Mock Heroic:**

Dickens varies his style to suit the subject matter. It may happen that the theme be trivial, and the style flamboyant, to create a dichotomy between the two — an instance of the mock-heroic style. A few examples of mock heroic style are presented below:

The smoke discoloured ceiling, the dust and cobwebs, were among the most prominent decorations of the office of Mr Sampson Brass. (*TOGS*

320) or: The simple act of sleeping is expressed thus "at last betook ourselves to bed too" (*DC* 95)

### **Sound Effects:**

In the passage given below an impression of slowness is created by the use of most stressed words having long vowels and diphthongs.

"Their way lay for the most part through the low grounds, and open plains; and except these distant places, and occasionally some men working in the fields, or lounging on the bridges under which they passed, to see them creep along, nothing encroached on their monotonous and secluded track." (*TO CS* 408)

### **Onomatopoeia:**

Here is a text passage with an array of onomatopoeic devices:

"The noise of carriages and carts, the rattle of wheels, the cries of men and boys, all the busy sounds of a mighty multitude instinct with life and occupation, blended into a deep murmur, floated into the room."

Above the hoarse loud hum, arose, from time to time, a boisterous laugh, or a scrap of some jingling song, shouted forth, by one of the giddy crowd would strike upon the ear, for an instant, and then be lost amidst the roar of voices and the tramp of foot-steps. (*TPP* 718-719)

Here the onomatopoeic words and different phrase lengths create an air of haphazard sound, coming from various places and directions.

### **Rhythm:**

Written prose has a rhythm which implies that not only verse but even prose has an implicit rhythm. About the functions of this device Nash says:

"there is a relationship between the rhythmic procedures of a text and the supposed intention of its author to convey a posture, reflect or evoke a state of mind, echo sensory impression or otherwise express a personality in confrontation with a theme." (*Designs in Prose* 119)

Thus we can say that the rhythm of a prose piece depicts the attitude of the writer towards the theme.

### **Modifiers:**

Dickens sometimes used plenty of adjectives, as in the passage given below:

"The sun shone pleasantly upon the bright water, which was sometimes shaded by trees, and sometimes open to a wide extent of country, intersected by running streams, and rich with wooded hills, cultivated land, and sheltered farms. Now and then a village with its modest spire, thatched roofs, and gable-ends, would peep out from among the trees; and more than once a distant town, with great church towers looming through its smoke, and high factories and workshops rising above the mass of houses, would come in view and, by the length of time it lingered in the distance, show them how slowly they travelled." (*TO CS* 408)

### **Phrases:**

Speed and animation are expressed by phrases of various length, as given below:

Hither and hither he dived that night: now working at the pumps, and now hurrying through the smoke and flame, but never ceasing to engage himself wherever noise and men were thickest. Up and down the ladder... (Or 69)

**Punctuality:** is expressed by measured and equal phrases, as given below: "rushes each day and night with mysteries and ghost-like punctuality; holding its swift and headlong course in all weathers, and seeming to bid defiance to the very elements themselves." (NN 50)

## Conclusion

In this way we see that Dickens, great as an artist, had various styles to suit the subject matter. Thus we see that language may be thought of as a set of arbitrary symbols, or as behaviour or conditioned response, or being innately creative in its use. Because it is rule-bound, and differs from other cognitive systems it deserves attention.

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