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TEACHING LITERATURE: AESTHETICS OF PHONOLOGICAL PATTERNING OF TEXTUAL EXTRACTS FROM SELECT ENGLISH LITERARY MASTERPIECES

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Abstract

Literature is language specially used. The idea that is most closely associated with the concept of "literariness" within the field of literary criticism, particularly with the Russian Formalist school of thought, which viewed literature as a distinct mode of language that draws attention to its own formal and functional features, setting it apart from everyday speech. This group of critics emphasized the idea that literature utilizes language in a unique way, employing devices like imagery, metaphor, and rhythm to create a distinct aesthetic experience. In this context, this paper takes into consideration the primary component of language, that is sound, initially termed as sound symbolism, or more appropriately the phonological patterning or phonostylistics of the often-quoted textual lines from the masterpieces in English literature in order to examine their literariness. Certain textual quotes have been taken from William Shakespeare, John Keats, S.T. Coleridge, Edgar Allan Poe, Samuel Beckett, Charles Dickens and P.G. Wodehouse as samples to examine the sound effects. Attempts have been made to focus on the emphatic points of sound-meaning relationship of such quotes having euphony, cacophony, alliteration, assonance, dissonance, and onomatopoeia. It is evident that rhythmic effects appeal to the readers in multiple ways. Sometimes, they usher high dramatic effects whereas some other times, they turn out to become emotional and philosophical appealing to the cognitive functions by establishing effective dialogic patterns among the author, text and readers.

Key words: Literariness, Formal and Functional, Sound Symbolism, Phonological Patterning,Phonostylistics, Masterpieces in English Literature, Dialogic Patterns

1. Introduction

The critical discussion regarding foregrounded features of sound-meaning relationship and phonological patterning can be noticed at a humorous audio-visual presentation on “A brief history of modern art in poetry” performed at the National Theater, London.

“Actor-1on Impressionism: Roses sway in soften reds/ Violets swim in murky blues/ Sugar sparkles in the light blurring into golden you.

Actor-2 on Surrealism: Roses are melting/ Violets are too/Keith is a giant crab

Actor-3 on Social realism: Roses are dead/ Violet is rife/Don’t sugarcoat this bitter life.

Actor-4 on Abstract expressionism: So you violets sweets/ Roses you’re is/ Red are roses blue/Sugar?

Actor-5 on Pop art: Roses go BLAM!/ Violets go POW!/Sugar is COOL!/ You’re so WOW!

Actor-6 on Conceptual art: Roses are red, quoted in blood/A deer’s severed head drips from above.”

One can repeat the reading-aloud activities to find the effects of the marked features of sound-meaning relationship putting contrastive stress and changing intonational patterns in each of the statements relating to “rose,” “violet,” and “sugar” which clearly present the multiple concepts of poetry as a manifestation of dialogic potential.

Although used as a technique to identify and understand patterns of speech sound errors in speech disorders, this presupposes that phonological patterning or phonostylistics studied within the field of phonology, encompasses the stylistic inventory of sounds (phonemes) in literary analysis; their distinctive features, syllable structure, stress patterns, and

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intonation; and thereby derives multiple contextual meanings. Essentially, phonology explores how sounds are structured and function within a language, including how they combine and influence each other. This involves the distinctive features of phonemes (voiceless or voiced); syllable structure patterns can involve the arrangement of consonants and vowels within a syllable (e.g., CV, CVC, CCVC). It is clear that stress patterns influence the rhythm and melody of English speech. Intonation, the rise and fall of pitch, adds another layer of meaning and emotion to spoken language.

Not only this, the phonological processes that indicates systematic patterns of sound change that occur during fluency in speech development happen to be one of the factors of sound-meaning effects. Then comes the connected speech processes in which (when words are spoken together in a continuous stream), various phonological processes occur. These include linking, intrusion, assimilation, elision (omission of sounds), and others. These processes help to streamline speech and make it flow more naturally. This involves several key elements in which phonemes, allophones and their complementary distribution occur in specific phonetic environments. Phonological patterning reveals the underlying structure of sounds. It explains how variations in pronunciation contribute to meaning, fluency, and language development.

2. Methodology

The methodology involves applied linguistic parameters, or more specifically stylistic/foregrounding analysis which researches how sound elements are organized to highlight meaning, such as identifying alliteration, dissonance or assonance in poetry. It examines individual phonemes (vowels and consonants) and their symbolic or sonic contribution to the text becomes highly literary. Also, it analyzes larger sound structures like rhythm, syllable structure, stress, and meter, and phonological modeling leading to highlighting components of phono-aesthetics.

3. Results and Discussion

3. 1Phonological Patterning in Literary Writings in English

Worth saying, English is a stress-timed language. Here, the sound-meaning relationship is greatly considered in order to comprehend the modalities of discourse. In literary writings, this is more emphasized for producing stylistic and literary effects. Like the potential writings in well-known languages like Sanskrit, Greek and Latin, this is evident in the writings of most of the English classics of all genres ranging from William Shakespeare to Salman Rushdie or more, the inherent feature of sound-meaning and stylistic effects of phonological of words and expressions remains vital. In this regard, textual extracts from some of the well-known literary pieces can be taken for analysis.

3.2 A sample analysis of Sound-meaning Relationship in poetry

i. John Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" is a good example of this. In the poem, there are an immense range of sound effect with t/d and Ɵ/ð.

“My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains

My Sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,

Or empty some dull opiate into the drains

One minute passed, and Lethe-wards had sunk:

'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,

But being too happy in thine happiness—

That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees

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In some melodious plot

Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,

Singest of summer in full-throated ease." (Stanza-1, "Ode to a Nightingale")

Sound devices such as t/d, Θ/ð (+ unvoiced/voiced combinations) normally refer to the cacophony that creates a harsh, jarring effect that can add to the narrative tension of a piece of literature, amplify distressing emotions endured by the characters, or even evoke stress and anxiety in the reader to heighten the mood. The word also refers to the sound made by crows or other corvids, as in the phrase "a cacophony of crows."

ii. Repetition of words and phrases with alliterative effects rhythmically in S.T. Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is quite impressive. There is prominence of both initial [d] + [eI] in 'day' and [Id] final in 'painted' with vowel raising, and recurrence of alveolar nasal [n]which represent a surrealistic and epistemic uncertainty throughout.

"Day after day, day after day,

We stuck, nor breathe nor motion;

As idle as painted ship,

Upon a painted ocean." (Lines 115-118)

Thus, the stanza contains the idea that the mariner's life got stranded ironically as opposed to the rolling of time resulting in forming an image like a piece of art on a canvas. The poet really wants to give the impression of a piece of art with surrealistic effect that reflects on the life of human being at large.

Repetition in some of the most popular poems and their discourse features is supported by rhythm only due to sound effects which are properly punctuated. Therefore, for ages together, these nursery rhymes remain popular globally. Let us have a close look at the repetition or reduplication of words in such rhymes. One thing to be noticed in this is the falling tone in the second time repeated word. The contrastive stress in such rhymes creates a sportive and happy idea as well. Additionally, such rhythmic lines contain the potential of punctuational discourse too.

i. Bah, Bah (refers to sound produced by sheep) black Sheep.

ii. Johny, Johny,/Yes papa?/ Eating sugar? /No papa.

iii. Twinkle, twinkle, little star,/ How I wonder what you are!

iv. Tyger ! Tyger! Burning bright/ In the forests of the night.

The modality of repetitions goes onto form deeper philosophical implications in the well-known poems of Robert Frost. To consider, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," it is noticed that the poet repeats 'woods' in each stanza to reflect on the importance of it. At first, he wonders 'Whose woods,' then decides 'to watch his woods,' 'To stop …. Between the woods and frozen lake,' 'The woods are lovely, dark and deep'. The poem ends with the repetition of the line for obvious effects of expressing commitment as he says: 'And miles to go before I sleep, / And miles to go before I sleep.' "Woods" become metaphor of the mysterious beauty of nature. The image of a long-stretched road automatically comes to mind of the reader as a traveller.

Edgar Allan Poe's most famous poem "The Bells" (1849) can be a beautiful example in this context. To quote:

"To the tintinabulation that so musically wells

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From the bells, bells, bells, bells,

Bells, bells, bells—

From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells." (Lines 11-14)

Apart from the medial nasal cluster like [nt], [ŋ] and [nk], the repetition employed by Poe is a form of epizeuxis, where the word "bells" appears in immediate succession. This repetition produces an onomatopoeic effect, gradually evoking the sound of clanging metal. Poe reiterates the word "bells" 62 times in the poem to achieve a distinct stylistic impact of the 'clamour and clanger' of bells 'keeping times, times, times,' as a milestone of life and brings an end to the poem with 'the moaning and the groaning of the bells' meaning the warnings of the events of life from birth to death.

The catchy writing style of Dr. Seuss' "One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish" (1960) is another beautiful example where a kind of pleasant musical note is apparently visible:

"One fish, Two fish, Red fish, Blue fish,

Black fish, Blue fish, Old fish, New fish.

This one has a little car.

This one has a little star.

Say! What a lot of fish there are." (Lines 1-5)

It's fun, it's fanciful, and it rhymes! Not only is these lines easy for beginning readers to get through (and perhaps even memorize with reference to "Fis phenomenon"), but the use of repetition is employed as a rhetorical device developing numerical and chromatic cognition.

3.3 Euphony as a Sound-meaning Device

"Euphonics, as David Rush (2005) explains, refers to the sequence of sounds produced by words and sentences when spoken with varying moods and modalities. It is a crucial aspect of play analysis, since plays are designed for performance and words are typically received by the audience through hearing rather than sight. Language in drama is intended to create an aural rather than a visual experience, and the way it sounds often conveys as much meaning as what it signifies. In this regard, the language of a play closely resembles music or spoken poetry, as it contributes to mood creation through:

- The sounds of the vowels and consonants
- The use of assonance, dissonance, and alliteration
- The emotional quality of rhythm. (Rush 2005, p.83)

The relationship between sound and meaning in drama—referred to as euphonic or, synonymously, phono-aesthetic study—emphasizes the intrinsic pleasantness or beauty (euphony) of words and sentences in enhancing dramatic effect at the semantic level. This natural progression from sound to meaning facilitates both cognitive and metacognitive processes of understanding. Ultimately, within the communicative encoding process, texts enable the decoding of multiple layers of contextual, sociocultural- temporal, and pragmatic meanings.

Moreover, the clustering of phonemes shared across groups of words in dialogues—often marked by deviation, repetition, and a kind of universality of expression—renders the language more meaningfully engaging. This principle also aligns with the oriental approach to poetic analysis. The psycho-phono-lexicosyntactic relationship, and its effect as articulated in

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Dhvanyaloka by Anandavardhana, reinforces the rasa of emotive language through vacyartha (explicit meaning) or mukhyartha (primary meaning), and is equally applicable to the stylistic analysis of King Lear in performance."

3.4 A Sample Analysis of Sound-meaning Relationship in Drama

A striking feature in *King Lear* is the stoic disposition evident in the dialogues of both Lear and Edgar. They endure suffering with a composure that reflects an ideal of human perfection. Lear suffers due to his misjudgment, while Edgar's trials arise from his simplicity; yet, in dramatic terms, such suffering also foregrounds their heroism. This is clearly expressed in their speech. On one occasion, Lear, intending to speak with Gloucester and summon Cornwall to understand Kent's punishment, observes: '…… we are not ourselves when nature, being oppress'd, commands the mind to suffer with the body: I'll forbear…'. (2.4.104–6). Elsewhere, he remarks, '…the tempest in mind doth from my senses take all feeling else save what beats there.' (3.4.12) and asserts, '…. No, I will weep no more … pour on, I will endure.' (3.4.18). Edgar, consoling Gloucester after his blinding, declares, 'What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure their going hence, even as their coming hither; Ripeness is all: come on.' (5.2.9–11).

Lear's stoic endurance is further underscored by Kent at the moment of his death: 'The wonder is, he hath endured so long. He but usurped his life.' (5.3.318–9). Phonetically, the prominence of consonants such as [t], [d], [n], and [m], along with the vowel sounds [I], [j], and [u], conveys subtle emotional intensities. In *King Lear*, the endurance of suffering—often expressed through a language that borders on madness—emerges as a purgatorial process shaping the profound moral stature of both Lear and Edgar.

Following the humiliation inflicted by his daughters, Lear confesses that he is 'cut to the brains' (4.6.194). When his patience falters, he exclaims, 'Vengeance, plague, death, confusion!' (2.4.93). This is followed by another poignant expression of his wounded dignity: 'Prithee, daughter, do not make me mad. I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell.' (2.4.215–16). Soon after, he reveals a deep emotional collapse: 'I have a full cause of weeping; but heart shall break into a hundred thousand flaws…. I shall go mad.' (2.4.281–3). He then continues his turbulent outbursts, marked by a succession of forceful, consonant-heavy expressions that signal the onset of madness.

"Let the great gods,

That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads,

Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,

That hast within thee undivulged crimes,

Unwhipp'd of justice: hide thee, thou bloody hand;

Thou perjured, and thou simular man of virtue

That art incestuous: caitiff, to pieces shake,

That under covert and convenient seeming

Hast practised on man's life: close pentup guilts,

Rive your concealing continents, and cry

These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man

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More sinn'd against than sinning." (3.2.48-59)

It begins in an exhortative imperative mode, where the prominence of sounds such as [k], [t], [d], [m], and [n] lends the dialogue an aggressive, warm, and clipped quality. The consonantal texture in phrases like 'concealing continents, and cry' and 'sinn'd…sinning,' along with phonic clusters such as [gr], [dr], [tr], [kr], and [pr], conveys a sense of gravity. The declaration, 'I am a man…,' stands out as the most significant moment in the dialogue, marking Lear's separation from his kingship and his subsequent transformation into a common man (2.2.85).

This moment serves as a turning point in his role. The prominence of [t]—or t-voicing—signals a shift in his mental state. Within the same dialogue, he assumes a philosophical stance, as reflected in the line, 'The art of our necessities are strange and can make vile things precious.' (3.2.71). Phonologically, the speech is marked by aspirated phonemes that release bursts of air, such as [p^h] in 'practised' and 'pentup,' and [k^h] in 'close,' 'concealing continents,' 'covert,' and 'cry,' suggesting the character's deep and grave concerns.

The progression from king to man, and ultimately to a madman, traces the evolution of his personality, as his mind moves from ego toward a form of superego. The staging of the storm scenes on the heath produces a powerful dramatic effect, though the most intense storm rages within Lear himself. The overall impact of the scene depends largely on Lear's presence. In his earlier state of power and glory, he perceived life, nature, and cause-and-effect as orderly and controllable; however, he is now thrust beyond his royal ego into an unfamiliar and ironic reality. Through self-confession and the experience of irony, he emerges as an ultimate stoic philosopher. Furthermore, in Scene 4, his dialogues dramatize a dichotomy between body and mind, with speech patterns emphasizing clusters such as onset [gr], [fl], [st], along with [t], [m], and [n], as he says:

"Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm

Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee;

But where the greater malady is fix'd,

The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'ldst shun a bear;

But if thy flight lay toward the raging sea,

Thou'ldst meet the bear i' the mouth.

When the mind's free,

The body's delicate: the tempest in my mind

Doth from my senses take all feeling else

Save what beats there…….O, that way madness lies;

let me shun that; No more of that." (3.4.6-22).

The dialogue appears partially semantically incoherent; however, the lines 'But where the greater malady…..' and '….the tempest in my mind doth from my…' contribute a logical coherence that reinforces the King's stoic and cognitive condition. The terms 'senses' and 'feeling' are associated with imagination, which is now in a 'tempest'—an apt metaphor for his state of madness.

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The internal violence of the mind corresponds with the external violence of nature, culminating in the notion of 'greater malady'. Consequently, Lear suggests that sensory perception and feeling are diminished when the mind is in turmoil. The euphony of madness intensifies the play's pragmatic weight, rhetorically underscoring his commitment to endurance. This is evident in the binary opposition of the comparative degrees 'greater' and 'lesser', as well as in the emphasis created by 'scarce' preceding the verb 'felt' and the construction 'doth+ take'.

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* can also be taken as a textual sample. Although there are incoherent, run-on and fragmented sentences, the sound-meaning patterns as well as the repetitions are remarkably perceived with dramatic intensity. Here, the dialogue of Lucky is worth noticing.

> "LUCKY: Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattmann of a personal God quaquaquaqua with white beard quaquaquaqua outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell and suffers like the divine Miranda with those who for reasons unknown but time will tell …. it is established as hereinafter but not so fast for reasons unknown that as a result of the public works of Puncher and Wattmann it is established beyond all doubt that in view of the labors of Fartov and Belcher left unfinished for reasons unknown of Testew and Cunard left unfinished …. that man in short that man in brief in spite of the strides of alimentation and defecation wastes and pines wastes and pines and concurrently simultaneously what is more for reasons unknown in spite of the strides of physical culture the practice of sports such as tennis football running cycling swimming flying floating riding gliding conating camogie skating tennis of all kinds dying flying sports of all sorts autumn summer winter winter tennis of all kinds hockey of all sorts penicillin and succedanea in a word I resume flying gliding golf over nine….. of all sorts in a word for reasons unknown in Feckham Peckham Fulham Clapham namely concurrently simultaneously what is more for reasons unknown….." (p.47).

Apart from the greater frequency in the use of action words in asyndeton parameter, the binary sounds of [t] and [d], initial consonant clusters like [sp], [st], [fl], [gl], and prefix un- mark the potential of phonological patterning focusing on the philosophy of 'reasons unknown.' As a matter of fact, clusters using soft consonants like [l], [m], [n], and [r] tend to sound more melodious and contribute to euphony whereas harsh sounds or conversely, clusters of hard, percussive sounds like [k], [p], and [t] can create a less pleasant, jarring effect. Voiced fricatives such as [v], [z], [ʒ], and [dʒ] also tend to enhance euphony when they are part of a cluster. Euphony is also influenced by the specific placement and combination of sounds within words and across syllables. The presence of harsh or complex consonant clusters can create a contrast with softer, more euphonious parts of a text, drawing attention to the discordant elements.

3.5 A Sample Analysis of Sound-meaning Relationship in Prose

The beauty of sound-meaning relationship is apparently visible in the masters of English prose like Francis Bacon, Samuel Johnson, T.B. Macaulay, Charles Dickens, Charles Lamb, and many others.

A passage from Charles Dickens *Little Dorrit* (1857) can be taken depicting London which is remarkable. Here, he provides some physical details, and conveys the feel of the place with idiosyncratic touches.

> "It was a Sunday evening in London, gloomy, close, and stale. Maddening church bells of all degrees of dissonance, sharp and flat, cracked and clear, fast and slow, made the brick-and- mortar echoes hideous. Melancholy streets, in a penitential garb of soot, steeped the souls of the people who were condemned to look at them out of windows, in dire despondency. In every thoroughfare, up almost every alley, and down almost every turning, some doleful bell was throbbing, jerking, tolling, as if the Plague were in the city and the dead-carts were going round. Everything was bolted

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> and barred that could by possibility furnish relief to an overworked people. No pictures, no unfamiliar animals, no rare plants or flowers, no natural or artificial wonders of the ancient world--all TABOO with that enlightened strictness, that the ugly South Sea gods in the British Museum might have supposed themselves at home again. Nothing to see but streets, streets, streets. Nothing to breathe but streets, streets, streets. Nothing to change the brooding mind, or raise it up. Nothing for the spent toiler to do, but to compare the monotony of his seventh day with the monotony of his six days, think what a weary life he led, and make the best of it--or the worst, according to the probabilities." (p.78)

The rhythms of the over-punctuated sentences with polysyndeton are quite unique with repetitions; and the marvelous use of the word "steeped" is noticed in the third sentence. Apart from the predominance of the allophonic variants of [d] and [l]; the clusters [gl],[kl],[kr], [kl], [fl], [st], and [br] mark the smoothness of expressions leading to creation of imagery as an outcome of sound-meaning relationship.

In this context, another sample can be taken from P. G. Wodehouse's "Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey" (*Blandings Castle and Elsewhere*,1935) to look into the magic of phonological patterning.

> "Resting his hands on the rail before him, James Belford swelled before their eyes like a young balloon. The muscles on his cheekbones stood out, his forehead became corrugated, his ears seemed to shimmer. Then, at the very height of the tension, he let it go like, as the poet beautifully puts it, the sound of a great Amen.
> 'Pig-HOOOOO-OOO-OOO-O-O-ey!'
> "They looked at him, awed. Slowly, fading off across hill and dale, the vast bellow died away. And suddenly, as it died, another softer sound succeeded it. A sort of gulpy, gurgly, plobby, squishy, wofflesome sound, like a thousand eager men drinking soup in a foreign restaurant."(p.68)

The distribution of the sounds [r], [l] and [d] makes it depict the personality of James Belford. Additionally, the onomatopoeic effects are also clearly marked in dragging attention towards the atmosphere of suspense. There is no need of understanding meaning of words and phrases for that matter. The sound-meaning relationship makes it clear.

4. Critical Discussion and Conclusion

Earlier, the idea of sound symbolism was given priority giving emphasis on the perceptual similarity between speech sounds and concept meanings. It is a form of linguistic iconicity. For example, the English word ding may sound similar to the actual sound of a bell. Linguistic sound may be perceived as similar to not only sounds, but also to other sensory properties, such as size, vision, touch, or smell, or abstract domains, such as emotion or value judgment. Such correspondence between linguistic sound and meaning may significantly affect the form of spoken languages. This aesthetic notion of sound-meaning effects is of great importance in the classical writings. More appropriately, it is associated with the concept of Sphota and Nirukta that are ideophones depicting sensory imagery. Unlike onomatopoeia, an ideophone refers to words that depict any sensory domain, such as vision or touch. Additionally, phonaesthemes are also considered meaningful in interpreting words and expressions. Sound-meaning relationship is an enterprising art of rhetoric. In English language teaching and learning contexts, the understanding of a literary texts primarily relies on the technique of effective reading aloud or recitation and dialogic discourse followed by silent reading and interpretation. Comprehending the sound-meaning relationship and phonological patterning yields valuable textual data in this regard.

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