The Cord That Binds Linguistics and Literature.

By

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Abstract
If linguistics is the study of language(s), and literature is the art that uses language, then, there is every tendency for both to strike a symbolic cord. This paper presents that cord that binds linguistics and literature – language, which is at the center in the study of both; and examines the contributions of linguistics to literary studies. Consequently, literature cannot be devoid of language just as linguistics is of no use without expression through language. Thus, the beauty of linguistics lies in the expression through literature specially, when considering adages and proverbs which have regional cleavage. Also, it is expression through literature that a new lexicon can be introduced into a language. This paper therefore, seeks to establish the contributions of linguistics to the study of literature through the use of language. This paper also demonstrates how the understanding of the linguistic pattern of a language helps in understanding the literature; and as such, language enhances literature and literature protects and or, preserves language. The study shall expose the truism in the foregoing as well as bring to the fore, the inextricable relationship woven into the two.

Key Words: Linguistics, Literature, Language and stylistics, Cord

Introduction
A deep perusal of literary texts or materials and the study of linguistics, reveal how both walk hand-in-hand because “…the primary function of
literature (...imaginative literature) is to beautify language” (Godfrey Amaefula Worgu 1). Linguistics is concerned with the study of human language(s). "... it is concerned with language as an observable phenomenon of human activity, both in its general principles and in the particular realizations which we call ‘languages - English, French, Malay, Arabic....” (Raymond Chapman 4). Daniel, N. Ogum lent a camaraderie voice when he averred that linguistics is “... the systematic study of human language” (2017:1), or “...the field in which language is studied systematically” (2003:1). The systematic character of language includes the use of observations, hypothesis collecting and testing data to confirm or reject the hypothesis.

Literature according to David I. Hanauer, Don Kuiken and Frank Hakemulder “... is broadly defined as all cultural artifacts that embody literary devices, such as narrative genre, stylistic variations, and figurative language. The domain includes novels, short stories, and poetry, but also theatre, film, television, and digital media” DPI: 10.1075/ssol.3.2.01edi. It is also referred to as “...the aesthetic use of language to create and imitate experiences” (Ogum 2017:1). The afore positions demonstrate the interconnectedness of literature and linguistics. A point needs clarification here. It will be specious to think that literature is only limited to that which is written. It goes beyond that. Thus, Ngugi WaThiong’o, aligning to this assertion reports, “Was it (literature) only that which has been written down in black and white? Put that away, it becomes apparent how inadequate the word is to define the verbal embodiment of a people’s creative spirit” (1972:68). However, it goes without stating explicitly that this research endeavour focuses only on the written form of literature. On that note therefore, adopting a panoramic definition which shall suffice in this study, Emeaba, Onuma Emeaba avows that literature inter alia is “…a deliberate attempt to give linguistic shape to humanity; to mould experience, emotional and social experience into the shapes laid down by the linguistic community and, where necessary, to expand and enlarge the
shapes in order to fit new or newly perceived experience. (110). This implies that a language could be studied diachronically (the historical study of language(s) or synchronically (the study of language(s) at a given period of development.

**Theoretical Framework**

Though stylistics offers a meeting point between linguistics and literature, the concept of ‘Literary Linguistics’ with regard to the study of literature shall be adopted as it is more appropriate to this study. And as it concerns the contributions of linguistics to the study of literature; which explores the links between theoretical linguistic models and literary texts. However, they shall be used interchangeably as the study progresses.

Accordingly, literary linguistics theory helps to improve the analysis and appreciation of literary texts through the application of several aspects of linguistic theory. This foregrounds the fact that, the study of literature and language are meaningfully related to each other and not to be seen as mutually exclusive.

It is imperative at this juncture to note that, literary linguistics is a recognized discipline that examines literary texts through linguistic background. Notably, this was not formally the case in the early days of literary linguistics. Recently, the theory has gained more impetus and a wide acceptance in academic fields of study.

**The Contributions of Linguistics to the Study of Literature**

The field of linguistics is majorly concerned with the investigation of literary uses of language. Consequently, “It cannot be taken for granted that the features which distinguish literature from non-literature are describable in linguistic terms” (A.L. Binns 118). This implies that it is at the corridor of the linguist to determine what text is literary or not. The study of linguistics in literature means the "... application of linguistic
techniques to literary text” (Roger Fowler 26). This suggests that literary text has linguistic form which yields itself to linguistic investigation. Thus, the linguist describes the linguistic features as they appear in literary text.

Stylistics is “... concerned with relating linguistic facts (linguistic description) to meaning (interpretation) in an explicit way as possible” (M. Short 5). Stylistics is thus not just attracted to the meaning of a text but also in how this meaning is realized. That is, the means that readers use willfully or unknowingly when making sense out of a text.

In literary linguistics, different types of methodologies, that is ways of approaching a text, can be used or even combined with each other when analyzing literary texts. In this analysis, the paper adopts the Signs-Related Textual Analysis (S RTA) Model, which is graphically represented:

**The Sign-Related Textual Analysis (S RTA) Model.**
The Sign-Related Textual Analysis (S RTA) is a model for stylistics analysis propounded by Daniel N. Ogum, in the year 2002. The model has proofed areliable tool for stylistics investigation of literary texts. The thrust of this model, in the words of its proponent “... establishes a bridge between language and literature (because) in literature, language is experimental: and in language scholarship, the peculiarities of literature which enrich human language are determined” (2017:38). Thus, this model to stylistics study explores textual literariness descriptively as well as interpretively. The S RTA model for stylistic analysis according to Ogum:

... presupposes a beginning with a text. The text may be a poem...a novel, a play, a tongue-twister et cetera. A literary text in this context is an artifact usually encoded in phonic or graphic patterns.... Beyond that level ... are significant word-building processes and the linear concatenation of words in expression.... One examines the textual meaning.... The
semantic level is interpretative. Signs-Related Textual Analysis is useful for a profound literary explication. It is methodical and systematic. It enables the critic to validate literary act with linguistic and extra-linguistic data (2017:40-41).

Hence, this model suggests the interpretation of a literary text at all levels of grammatical representation—morphologically, phonologically, syntactically and semantically.
Phonic Patterning of Text

Funmi Adesanya advances that language “…is the chief means by which human beings communicate. It is the human means of communication that involves speech or spoken sounds. Language represents a well-organized system, by which sounds and meanings are related’ (1). The statement carries the fact that sounds could aid contextual meaning. The phonic patterning of text studies the impact of sounds upon a text which is otherwise known as ‘phonostylistics’. The sound system of language flourishes in the field of phonology which is “…the study of …sound…” (J. McH 68). Sound patterning of text most times, suggests or carries meaning which adds to the understanding of a text. For example, in “Odi”, one of Ibiwari Ikiriko’s poems in his poetry collection, Oily Tears of the Delta, there is a suggestive meaning of ‘lament and wailing’ through the persistent onomatopoeic sound ‘O’ and an immense ‘destruction’ in the recurring consonant sound /d/. The poem equally achieves foregrounding through repetition of ‘Odi’ in virtually all the lines thus:

Odi
Odi O Odi
Did Odi do the deed?
Odi
O Damn it!
Odi O Odi.
Did Odi do the deed?
That caused the
casus belli For Such
massive arsenal
assault?
Did Odi do the deed,..
O damn it!
Odi
Odi O Odi
Did Odi do the deed...
O, how many corps make a community of corpses?...
O, a brazen demolition of our land and life. (63-4).

KointeinTrinya affirmed that:

In “Odi”, the poet mourns the destruction of the town. The lamentation is unmistakable in the recurrent /o/ sound both in the name of the town and in the exclamatory refrain, “O!” The onomatopoeic relation of sounds of heavy military bombardment with the name of the town is to the credit of the poet.... One can almost hear the ceaseless explosions of heavy artillery in the recurrent /d/: “Did Odi do the deed/.../ Odi O Odi...” as well as the clatter of light arms in the prominence of clattering sounds in “That caused the casus belli.” We find therefore, in the poem, that musical quality of poetry to combine sense and sounds(405).

In the words of Anderson Robert et al, “…meaning is also expressed by the sound of the poem” (304). Also, the intensifier ‘o’, “… used to express the extent or degree to which a quality is present” (Glory Worukwo 89) intensifies the horrific crisis faced by the inhabitants of Odi, a community in Bayelsa state, of Nigeria.

Another example is “Song”, a poem that opens Ebi Yeibo’s collection of poetry, The Forbidden Tongue. The poem is musical with alliterative sounds. The poet urges us to “Make canorous music” a music that will “Moisten calcified farmlands/ with scathing manure/Cleanse cringing creeks/Cadavers and maelstroms/With searing song/.../stroke the sagging sun (19). Alliterative sounds are unambiguously replete in the poem as in “make...music,” “Cleanse cringing creeks” “searing song” and “stroke the sagging sun”, Eyoh Luke remarks that alliterations in Yeibo’s poetry is “…a principal character in the poet’s idiolect” (13). Thus, linguistics
analysis helps to foreground this poetic beauty which adds to a deeper appreciation of the poem. This is also exemplified in this tongue twister that bears alliterative sibilant sounds “Some Stupid Students Started Smoking Cigarette Since Sixteen Sixty-Six”. Hence, phonological formations convey aural impressions” (Ogum 2017:50).

Graphitic and Graphological Patterning of Text.

Graphology as stated by Ogum, is “... a system of writing which includes spelling, punctuation, versification and paragraphing (2017:50). He further admitted that “Graphological pattern convey visual impressions which have implications for textual meaning...” (2017:50). Implicit in this assertion is the fact that the graphic patterns or shapes of a poem could also suggest some explicit or implicit meaning of a text.

Ogum, in his collection of poetry, *Green Nightmares*, refers to this as “talking shapes” (2002:blurb). It is a collection of poetry that is supposed “... to capture the Niger Delta agonizing realities (blurb). For example, one of the poems, “egni - quake”: Day of deluge.

    In 1972
    Fire burnt underground
    Pipes burst while talking
    In anger
    And the heart of
    The land began topalpitate Impatiently
    Bold men trembled with fear Buildings shook in fear
    Speaking in fear
    To their renegade inhabitants
    Night hid herself in the
    Luminous fierce fire
    Of flaring witchcraft
    And the sky echoed the mayhem
Weary children sauntered in front
Of elders clutching valuables
On the journey to "who-knew-where?"
Who have been dislodged...
But not resettled (64 - 65)

is a poem about the "... earth tremor of 1972 in Egni homeland occasioned by drilling accident ... a reading taken by the mental feet of troubled refugee" (iv). As a witness he equally states “I have attempted to portray the Niger Delta in ... phonic and graphic design” (iv). Therefore, the poem may not appeal to the mind if it were written in a normal poetic verse. The graphic design of “egni-quake” in a wave or zigzag-like manner portrays and leaves an indelible picture in the mind’s eye, of the troubles that bedeviled the Egni people of the Niger Delta region, of Nigeria. It depicts the mental feet of dispatched Egni people as they ran for their lives because of the earth tremor of 1972, occasion by oil drilling. The poem indeed leaves the pictorial event of how the people - old and young - ran in helter-skelter; and accentuates the ordeal they passed through. Trinya refers to them as “... concrete poetry” (399). The whole poem is stylistic, starting from its cover page, Green Nightmare. Can a nightmare be green?

**Word Structure and Paradigmatic Relations**

Another level on which literature acquires stylistics/linguistics prominence is word formation. This is the field of morphology in language study. Etymologically, morpheme is a derivative of a Greek word - *morphe* - translated as “form”. This is why Ibiere Ken-Maduako, defines morphology as “…the study of forms” (8). Thus, a morpheme is “the smallest unit of speech that has semantic or grammatical meaning” (S.H.O, Tomori 25). Similarly, Ogum defines morpheme as “… a minimal sign that has meaning attached to it.... It may exist at the stem, or affix, etc.” (2017: 53).

Linguistics is accordingly, concerned with how different morpheme
combines in literary text to make meaning. Hence, linguistic studies how choices of word are carefully arranged in a text. The structure of words in a literary text may be simple or sophisticated; it is the choice of the writer to decide. For instance, in J.PClark’s “Streamside Exchange”, the choices of words are simple:

**CHILD**
River bird river bird,
Sitting all day long
On hook over grass
River bird river bird,
Sing to me a song…

**BIRD**
You cannot know
And should not bother;
Tide and market come and go…

(K. E.Senanu and T. Vincent 129).

This is a very simple but meaningful poem. The choices of words are simple too because it is a conversation between a child and a bird. The level of knowledge of participant in a literary text also influences the choice of words. Writers employ this carefully. This is a credit to the poet who artistically used single morpheme all through. This runs contrary to Wole Soyinka’s poem “Procession 1 - Hanging day” “Hanging day. A hollow earth/Echoes footsteps of the procession/Walls in sunspots/Lean in shadow of the shortening morn/.../...eyepatch lushly...,.... (124). There is a plethora of complex double morphemes in the entire poem, for instance:

- Hanging - Hang + ing.
- Echoes - Echo + es.
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Footsteps - Foot + steps.
Sunspots - Sun + spots
Eyepatch - Eye + patch.

**Linear Word Order and Syntagmatic Relations**

This level is concerned with the combination of words in linear order. This is the level of the sentence. “Syntax is the study of the structure of sentence i.e how the various words are combined to form grammatical and meaningful sequence” (W.O. Olu-Aderounmu et al 35). The syntactic study of English reveals three basic types of sentences: simple, compound, and complex. A literary text may deviate from this syntactic rule in order to achieve foregrounding. For example:

1. Colourless black dog barks at night.
2. Night all the barks dog.
3. The dog barks all night.

The first sentence is grammatical but anomalous. The second is ungrammatical and meaningless while the third is grammatical and meaningful.

It is noteworthy that “The task of linguistics ... is to work out the rules of language...” (R.A Hudson 2), however, a literary scholar may choose either to obey those basic grammatical rules or deviate, provided the text carries some sense.

**The Level of Semantics**

Succinctly put, semantics is the study of meaning. Linguistics also studies the meaning of words in a text. This could be a surface or deeper/interpretative meaning. The words which make up the text are carefully chosen for specific reasons. Literature as an art that uses language for aesthetic impression, "... seem to offer language which is different from what may be loosely termed the ‘normal’ or everyday
usage of a speech community, yet which is intelligible to the members of
that community....” (Chapman 4). He states further that “... literature is
the work of men who were specially sensitive to the language of their
time and who used the skills of language to make permanent their vision
of life. They manipulate language to make it contain a unique series of
experiences and interpretation” (5). This implies that literary language is
being chosen and deployed by its user with extreme care and intricacy
than the average users can exercise. For instance, David Diop’s “The
Vulture”, deviates from ‘normal’ language usage but achieves
foregrounding through the use of personification:

In those days
When civilization kicked
us in the face
When holy
water slapped our
cringing brows

The vultures built in the shadow of their talons... (Senanu and Vincent 70).
There is collocation misappropriation in the above poem, ‘civilization’
cannot kick just as ‘water’ cannot slap. The poem however, conjures
strong images of Africa’s colonial experience or the control of Africa by Europe
under the pretext of civilization.

**Aesthetic Meaning**
The aesthetic level of meaning is seen as the most paramount in a text. “On
this level, meaning is examined in relation to appreciation of values in the
realm of expressive beauty” (Ogum 2017:68). Literary text achieves this
beauty of language use through schemes and tropes as in figures of speech,
stress pattern, sound devices, etc. A typical example is Diop’s “The
Vulture” stated above. Another example is “Salute to the Elephant”, a
traditional poetry which is foregrounded with the repetitive use of ‘O
elephant’ in almost all the lines. Also, Ikiriko’s “Remembering Saro-Wiwa
is another example:

Let’s not forget
that Saro-Wiwa
was a writer
a writer
a writer
Let’s not forget
that Saro-Wiwa
was a righter
a righter
a righter…(Ikiriko 39).

The poem achieves foregrounding with the obvious repetition and the use of homophones - words that have the same pronunciation but have different spelling and meaning. The poet manipulates words as ‘writer’ and ‘righter’ to achieve this and make his vision clear, that a writer is or should be a ‘righter’

Furthermore, the World-Focus level of meaning is concerned with how a literary text is organized to create a reality. Thus, at this point we examine the relationship between the imaginative world and the world of reality and how has the text, through its plot structure gained credibility. Hence, the reader, audience, or the society should be able - at the Interpersonal Level of meaning - determine the specific purpose a text serves. Whether it is to educate, entertain, inform, or to warn. Thus, this engenders profound relationship between the writer or composer, and the reader. Ngugi summarizes this when he declared that “Language was not a mere string of words but it had a suggestive power well beyond the immediate lexical meaning” (86). Hence, “We ... value words for their meaning and nuances” (86). This signifies that a text could be relished or valued based on its obvious meaning or otherwise.
Another example of foregrounding - “A literary device whereby a word, sentence or expression is written in such a way as to attract attention to itself for what it is, rather than a vehicle for information” (Emeaba 79) is Kyei’s “Time” written thus:

or
replenished
forever whittling
whittling
whittling
away
away
away
away
all the vast
shores of
being!

And Lusuka’s “The Motorka” thus:
.. Or the button that lets out
bullets from the machine
through the eyes of the car -
shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh
hhhhh Let’s not talk about
it.

Or Niyi Osundere’s “The Nigerian Railway” which expresses nothingness on a surface meaning:

Dark
ky str
uctures
tor tuo
milli
The poems above may actually be expressing an idea(s) but the main purpose is merely to draw attention to itself and to ostensibly demonstrate how language is a tool for literary expression.

**Conclusion**
In conclusion, “The essence of literature is inherent in the imaginative use of language” (Ogum 2017:10). Onyemaechi Udumukwoi affirms this position when he said that language is the primary means, the vehicle for literary expression” (54). From the foregoing, it becomes crystal clear that linguistics as a field of study contributes in no small measure, to literature. It does not only provide the structure on which the literary artist depends, but it brings literary text to the limelight or focal point. It equally foregrounds literary endeavours through its linguistic investigations and analysis and as such, decodes its literariness and the beauty of its language use. Language therefore, enhances literature and literature protects language.

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