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Corpus Stylistics in Short Story

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Abstract:

Story writing is treated as a genre rarely and it is presupposed that the aim of story is only to amuse and for a little while but not to leave an indelible impression on the psyche of the reader. This paper aims at highlighting the features of story-writing with as many as eight parameters to be followed in composition of a story. Various writers are considered here, for study to showcase the practical application of the parameters. This study also endeavours to show how corpus stylistic methods make the understanding of story interesting and easy. FIT (Free Indirect Thought) is introduced in reading of a story to answer grammatical anomalies in a story. Here, it is made conspicuous that even a small story can be beautifully composed and understood with employment of some standards to its reading. These standards are not fixed and they also claim that the story is a set of moving mental pictures and the end puts an omega to the kleidoscopic images either with surprise, anticipation or sad approval. Independent reader – response may suggest or confirm such standards laid down, in this paper, with the mid-reading expectations issuing forth the subsequent feelings of surprise, suspense, uplift, belief, anger and loss.

Keywords: Parameters, mental picture, progression, fore-groundings, corpus stylistic methods, FIT (Free Indirect Thought).

Introduction:

This paper discusses putative textual signals required for narrative progression in short story. Innovative research methods – corpus linguistics enable the writer and reader to understand the gist of story in first glance. Corpus stylistics, in simple words, can be understood as research for blending literary interest with application of corpus tools. Here, the effort is not to explain or justify interest in narrative progression but to outline the core

and content of corpus stylistics with its utility in the perusal of research interest and also the textualization of various narrative prospection.

Narrative prospection is one of the stages of experiential sequence which invites the interest of readers whereas textual prospection generally, cumulatively and also serially adds to the charm of story by offering myriad conclusions to the story. The way, the text confirms or flouts the norms and beliefs of reader, it stimulates further the emotive-cognitive responses of readers. Textual expectation may be in favour of or averse to reader's experiential immersion in that particular story.

The entire argument, in this paper, suggests that short story should not be read as a product but as a process i.e. its end is not important, poetic justice is also not mandatory. Importance and attention are generally accorded to the process of events leading to struggle of characters, their devolution and evolution.

The process of story is a phased one wherein textual cues of suspense, fear, menace, grief, surprise, anger and other feelings create expectations of readers for protagonist about his/her marvelous, sparkling fortune or futility of his disproportionate efforts against unfairness of world and hard destiny. The process of story must unfold and encompass whole gamut of probable, putative, purported emotions and thoughts potent enough to absorb the attention of readers with an engaging narrative. The processed-in-sequence text chiefly but not solely guides the progression of perception of reader in understanding of emotional and analytical responses of protagonists.

A good story weaves a narrative in such a way that the reader finds himself immersed in the world of text with continuously growing interpretable as well predictable events which the text unfolds either thwarting or supporting the probabilities of the judgements of readers.

The most essential ingredient of short story is immersion of reader in its tiny frame so much so that he can swim and sink with the protagonist; he should feel all the impulses of the protagonist if not in emphatic tone at least ,in sympathetic tone. This methodology employed for short story is corpus stylistic.

Corpus linguistics ... involves rapid searching and sorting of electronic version of texts or language sample ... large computer searchable gathering of texts ... corpus analysis can usher in changes in our theories of text and language with particular emphasis on the collocational properties of language ..." (Toolan 106)

Corpus analysis facilitates rapid searching and selection of phrasal verbs and word forms which blended with theoretical commitment and ethics of corpus linguistics i.e. phraseology, collocation and lexical priming contribute to the understanding of structure and texture of short stories.

Some variations of, automatically, corpus linguistic theory gravitate towards phrasal sequence and syntagmatic which precede or follow node word e.g. ‘The idiom Principle’ for ‘Trust’, this sets contrast with description of standard language focusing on paradigmatic and grammatical categories in place of lexico-semantic features which rarely occur. Here, Open choice analyst asks :

What syntactic category is the target word and what are the categories from which proceeding and following words must come. (Toolan 107)

Here, the limits and limitations of corpus linguistics must be observed. Phrases like ‘naked eye’ replaced by ‘Scarcely visible to’ are predictable phrases much below the narrative stylistics crave for. The syntagmatic orientation and employment of corpus linguistics is local one without the reach necessary for such tasks; for instance, the question of a woman : “what’s going to happen?” This is when she discovers her husband’s affair, it stops the readers to raise such questions sailing on their curiosity, to reach what is inside silence of a woman; the text should prompt the reader to formulate expectations over formulaic expressions of a protagonist.

Expectation is very much cardinal propensity of humans, they can easily cope up with expected but they are equally, fascinated by the unexpected.

Chafe suggests that no amount of special reliance on schemas and also on pre-conceived modeling is adequate to all slips and changes and also differences that we face each new day. We welcome the unexpected arousals like fear, aggression to help us to be comfortable with the unexpected.

Narratives that present a conflict with expectations provide excitement by exercising the mind’s innate capacity to react and deal with inputs of such a kind. (Chafe 83)

Sinclair suggests the theory of encapsulation wherein each utterance of a text provides framework to adjust the next utterance. First part of text raises implicit issues to be addressed by subsequent discourse in parts to create prospects for further queries or gaps or ellipsis to be filled in by later part to resolve the conflict or to leave it open for conjectures and for

renewed set of readers with renewed efforts to evaluate the text. When a story is read, only a part of the story owns the responsibility to signal prospection and primarily, create reader's response and also their assumptions.

Reader also assumes that this core of narrativity carrying the possible hints is relatively noticed on easy terms. This core narrativity is specified by stylistic, linguistics of text, phrases and signature lines which stands taller than, in conspicuous terms in comparison to full circum ambient text, the main idea and can be easily pinpointed by relatively automatic or mechanical means which a short story encompasses to contribute to apprehend and convey the progression of it.

A major interim goal of the research is the deriving of a prospection – oriented abridgement of any story, a skeletal version of the story which contains the main triggers of readers “responses to perceived progression” (Toolan 108).

Horace in his ode *Carpe Diem* writes : *sapias, vina liques et spatio boenspem longam reseces* which is translated by James Michie as *Be wise, strain clear the win/and prune the rambling vine of expectation* (qtd in Toolan 108); it means the readers are predisposed, flanked by imagination and emotions, to allow the extravagant expectation run wildly even in small, curtailed sphere of short story. Paring and proving of vine of expectation is a requisite for far-flung idea of flowering, fruition and renewal but readers widen their perception with maturity. The writer of story should foster some thematic expectations rather than rambling one and should restrain antipathies or empathies of readers in a particularly productive methods and ways, not in any random way or in myriad ways.

Alice Munro in her story “Hateship, friendship, courtship, loveship, marriage”, with its wilful, inelegant title, shows how irresponsible and cruel intentions of Edith provide unforeseen happy consequences to others. The readers are entitled to some hints not self-defeating, comprehensive hints but a pervasive prolepsis wherein things are revealed in reverse order but with care to indicate that the preceding information should reasonably connect with following information even if the former part miscapably and necessarily cause the latter part or the last episode.

It is also related that reader expected a particular kind of stories from a particular narrator, for instance, Alice Munro's characters are very inconsequential in social status, they are very average, common place, she is expected never to fabricate a story from an influential states man or life- saving doctor or a soldier with sartorial élan. She weaves her story based

on suspicion and deliberately throws ellipsis and conjectures to a reader to fill the truth, the response of their own. In her story, “Friend of My Youth” for instance, she presents Flors as a devoted sister who loves her younger sister so much so that she allows her boyfriend to marry her younger sister and takes care of her in pregnancy, however Munro stimulates the mind of the reader presenting the extra- care and manipulated care of Flora to sabotage the life of her sister, finally, to ruin her. This ‘Third Eye’ view of Munroe’s stories makes the heroines the writers and heroes the villains.

Retention, introspection and retrospection also add to the suspense of story and forces the readers to jump into it to assess and evaluate the situation from their personal perspectives. The story can be universal in its appeal only when it unfurls the possibilities for personal perspectives of all kinds of readers and all kinds of ages.

The information which a vigilant reader encapsulates in his memory for future use finally becomes the gist not of the story but of his side of story which may coincide with narrator’s judgement or may not tally with his stance.

The reader makes a mental representation which accords him a maximally blurred and vague picture with a reservoir of ethical, emotional and intellectual responses and reactions. Milan Kundera in his study : “The curtain an essay in seven parts” specifies and comments on the warranted but inevitable process of forgetting the frame work and color which form every moment of our lives. The perpetual and continuous process of forgetting impinge upon the psyche of readers and surprisingly, resistance to this forgetting makes art unforgettable. Lyric survive the onslaught of forgetting but short story, narrative is a castle poorly fortified against corrosion of forgetting. Milan observes :

Forgetting participates in the reading continuously, with never a moment’s lapse; turning the page, I already forget what I just read; I retain only a kind of summary indispensable for understanding what to follow, but all the details, the small observations the admirable phrasing are already gone, erased ... the writer makes an indestructible castle of unforgettable. (Kundera 150)

Composition is explicitly distinctive to narrative art and is also inseparable from its aesthetic claims; story being distinguished from other forms of art, finds its beauty inseparable from aesthetic standards.

It is clearly noted that keyword analysis to probe and evaluate narrative progression creates a considerable gap for mapping of the main threads and issues of progression of story reflected in narrative lexical prominence and also its recurrence. The weakness relating to difficulties in application of corpus stylistic tools is in identification of para-repetitions i.e. non-identical echoic repetition of events or image with the use of semantically similar and identical but complexity-oriented lexical phrasing.

Munro in her story, for instance, presents all references to the injury on head prominently through out the text but without specific and full lexical repetition e.g. “braining ... banging his head ... headknocking against ... hitting your head” (“The Love of Good Woman” 2) in such a way that it evades the capture of understanding by frequent expression and fluency of sound.

The story requires a way marking in a particular way a set of overlapping but distinct textual features as special parameters of a narrative should be central for creation of expectations and prospectives of readers. Toolan suggests following textual resources in prospection of story and in making of narrative expectations:

1. Presence of top keyword featuring main character.
2. Presence of narrative tense dynamic verbs in which a frequent keyword, protagonist indulges in transitive argument.
3. Opening sentence of narrative.
4. Fully lexical, frequent keywords occurring at least four times in the text.
5. Presence of statements representing character’s thoughts.
6. Directive, future oriented informs and undertaking in direct speech.
7. Negative containing clauses : nowhere, nothing, never, in place of dis, im, in etc.
8. Presence of verbs showing modality, modulation in mental processing e.g. know, think, suspect, expect, wonder, realize and believe.

Statistically, topmost keyword in each story in a small sample is always to be the name or part of the naming prominent but not focalizing character.

In Carve’s “Cathedral” top keyword is *blind* whose name is Robert; In Joyce’s “Two Gallants” the top keyword is *Corley* not focalizing lenehan; in updike’s “A & P” it is *Lengel* (the manager).

The pattern and also rational behind using prominent name in place of a pronoun or alternative description is beyond average understanding because keyword features surprisingly facilitate emergence of a coherent narrative text and ensures its survival as blind man showcases the courage and struggle of Robert not his name in “The blind man” and Lengel is only one who is vocal about social narrow mindedness in “A & P”.

In “Blind Dog” by R.K. Narayan the dog is not physically blind but metaphorically as it chooses servility of a tyrant, blind man (who cannot choose) over freedom. Dog becomes blind in his spirit to put his freedom at stake for bare minimum of survival. Blind man in this story depends on dog and his handicap accords him no right to choose but dog resigns its freedom and forsakes its choice of freedom like a blind being.

In Carver’s “Boxer” the following sentences has keyword, Jill who conveys a distinct meaning to the story.

“I’ll miss you, too Jill!

Jill slips and sips her coffee and nods.

“I wish you could have been happier here”, Jill says.

“Jill”, I say; she waits for an answer from Jill but Jill doesn’t say anything ... Jill lowers her eyes to her cup” ... (3)

This remarkable piece of narrative is not only largely coherent but conveys inarticulate, fumbling and poignant interpersonal nexus between daughter and mother. Here, keywords repeatedly recurring in narrative play an important role in ‘way marking’ of narrative progression therefore, keywords impinge upon the psyche of reader and reflect on continuation of story. The textual features should plausibly contribute to expectation – progression and must be unmissable with a reasonable reader.

A corollary to just noticeable requisites related and relevant to corpus analysis forms the vital aspect of a textual from unmissed even by an average reader and this deserves to be amendable and adaptable to semi- automatic identification. In case, any text is implicit and obscure as to be retrievable and delectable by automation, it is least plausible that careful readers notice such development, at least, automation can not be a base for formation of their expectations. The analysts here, indulge in shuttling inductively but spontaneously between text- based simple observations or reader -ratified evidences. Corpus linguists also don’t sail

on abstract observations and consider Free Indirect Thought with specific and putative instances. In 'Two Gallants' by Joyce the following situations bring bigger impact :

He would be thirty one in winter. Would he never get a good job? Would he never have a home of his own? He might yet be able to settle down in some snug corner and live if he could only come across some good sample- minded girl with a little of readiness ... He knew Corley would fail; he knew it was no go.

When pronoun comes before modal, the latter should not be followed by not and if is, it indicates FIT.

The sentences are either interrogative or exclamatory in FIT; in putative FIT sentence contain modal verb or may be modal adjunct e.g. surely, probably, may be but without negation. How, when, where, while, offer imperfect criteria but in FIT sentences, they offer highest reliability as stimulus to reader's psyche.

FIT sentence in "Two Gallants" : "He knew Corley would fail; he knew it was no go" (Joyce 2), if judged by 8th parameter; involves modal for mental process. In Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain" FIT is detected in this following sentence : "The cat would go around to the right perhaps she could go along to the caves"(Hemingway 1).

FIT (Free Indirect Thought), FIS (Free Indirect Speech), FID (Free Indirect Discourse) are segments of story writing but the stories here under discussion tilt towards FIT and this is a prima facie, standard and index of prospection.

This mechanical, mechanistic but mysterious FIT is under anvil for two reasons; one, it is recognized as important considerably, to the plot and character development. In psychological stories, it is important to notice progression and prospection; second, FIT is highly reliable and detectable in first glance.

Easy detection enhances reader's attentiveness in the story with FIT segment and disclosure of pre-occupation of character and also expectation of readers in a profound way.

Conclusion:

Corpus stylistic methods enable the reader to refigure the story under discussion to visualize it in a distinct way with application of relatively also rationally robust text linguistically- tested standard with a goal of a good quality replicability. The categories and points mentioned here, offer progression foregrounding to read a story in a different way. The

procedures for reading offered in the discussion focus on vital textual segments of progression. It is difficult to lay down the standards and criteria to specify narrative features of a story but not impossible; the end of the story is important as it may be what the reader anticipates or may be exactly surprising to his expectations.

As discussed earlier also, a reader makes a vague picture of the events but everything in a narrative contributes potently to mental pictures– fluid and unresolved and basic, core, keywords stick to the memory of the reader. The prospecting and expectation – fostering parameters are basic sources for mental picture formation in a reader. The reading of this prospecting material enables the reader learn that the situation is not fixed and mental pictures are changeable. The eight-point standard stimulates readers with heightened awareness about ‘Sudden reversal’ ‘switchback’ and ‘roller coasters’ in a small canvas of story to make him anticipate narrative suspense and surprise. The movement of mental picture and FIT make the reader read the story till end and the story is not tossed away half-read with a predictable end. The corpus stylistic methods facilitate the analysis of a story to enhance its workability and potency to harouse the interest of readers in the story not for fun alone but to educate themselves in little time, space and limited thought.

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