# How to Apply Critical Linguistics in English/Persian Literary Works' Criticism

Saharsadat Hadigheh

Shiraz University of Medical Science, Shiraz, Iran

Tel: 98-917-3026328          E-mail: Hadighes@sums.ac.ir


Mohammad Saber Khaghaninezhad (Corresponding author)

Department of foreign languages and linguistics, Shiraz University, Iran

Shiraz University, Eram Square, Shiraz, Iran

Tel: 98-711-6284511       E-mail: mskhaghani@shirazu.ac.ir

**Abstract**

Selecting the most appropriate technique of literary criticism as decoding approach of meaning clarification which best match various types of literary pieces has occupied the minds of literary critics in recent decades. Stylistics as an instrument for analyzing literary texts seems to grasp the critics' attentions and has proven itself as a powerful linguistic means of implicature derivation. This article attempted to depict how the knowledge of linguistic intricacies can affect the reader's interpretation and help literary critics illuminate the unexplored literary corners of literary works. Furthermore, it is also claimed that attention to these underlying linguistic intricacies brings about a better understanding for the reader either consciously or unconsciously. Accordingly, three linguistically-inspired approaches (semantic technique linguistic technique and formal technique) for literary analysis are described and focused. Related concepts such as the role of context and literary intuition, "howness" of entering to the text and the boundary of literariness are discussed throughout the paper. Finally, in order to illustrate the fact that these linguistically-inspired techniques are not language or literature dependent, few practical examples of such analyses are presented for English and Persian literary pieces.

**Keywords:** Stylistic analysis, semantic/linguistic techniques of literary analyses, Literary intuition, Boundary of literariness, Implicature derivation

## 1. Introduction

The linguist/educationist Widdowson (1975) was, and still is concerned with developing a method of criticism that would be a middle ground between linguistics and literary criticism. The result of this approach was that "stylistic/semantic analysis shades imperceptibly into literary appreciation" (Widdowson, 1975, p. 117). This, for many literary critics at least, was considered unsatisfactory because the dominant paradigm of "scientific/objective linguistics" looked at the language of the text "without troubling about what it is attempting to convey" (Widdowson, 1975, p. 117). When Widdowson (1975) published his analysis of Robert Frost's *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, some critics accused him of not understanding the poem properly. To them it was probably because Widdowson had let his stylistic/semantic analysis lead him away from literary analysis. More importantly, they suggested that semantic/linguistic analysis had lured Widdowson into treating poetry as if it were ordinary prose. This, for many intrinsic critics, was the major heresy of applied linguistics and methodist criticism. Non-literary discourse can be paraphrased, they argued. Literature cannot.

Widdowson is firmly in the tradition of Empson (1951) in allowing his intuitions full rein, and his analysis, which was designed to "give a definite shape to my own intuitive sense of what the poem is about." (Widdowson, 1975, p. 121), made it perfectly clear that he did not believe that either linguistics or literary criticism could make definitive statements about the single meaning of a text:

I do not think that…there is any sure procedure of evaluating interpretations in terms of their relative 'correctness'… There seems to be no way of deciding impartially on the evidence of the poem itself whether 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' is about just some human sleep with its release from responsibility or the last long winter sleep when the moment of peace extends forever. (pp. 123–124)

Importantly, Widdowson argued that the poem elicits various responses, and the analysis of language, style, and lexicon of the text serves to enable a student/critic to articulate a personal response "the meaning of a literary work, intrinsic as it is to the unique use of language, can only be recognized by the individual because once it is expressed in different terms so as to be communicated to others it must inevitably change." (Widdowson, 1975, p.75). Widdowson (1982) argued that students need guidance, they need to be taught strategies, and they need a vocabulary. This is a particularly important statement because it brought methodist criticism into *applied* linguistics and had great significance in the light of the enormous growth of applied linguistics in communicative approaches to language teaching, whether that language was being taught as a first, second or foreign language.

Leech (1977), like Widdowson, argued for *stylistics* that draws together the linguistic and literary levels of analysis. He said "should provide purely formal criteria for identifying features which are likely to have aesthetic implication." (Leech, 1977, p. 9). But unlike Widdowson, he has considerably greater faith in what linguistics can achieve in the analysis of literary text. He examines an analysis by Leavis (1936) on Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale* and demonstrates how, by using the methods of linguistics, impressionistic statements about

the "fine organization" of a text can be made much more explicit interpretation. Linguistics does have explanatory capabilities, Leech argued (Leech, 1977, p. 20), and he used phonology (including meter) and syntax to demonstrate this.

This article is an attempt to show how underlying semantic interconnections of words in literary texts affect the readers' intuitions and lead to unconscious conveyance of meanings (widdowson's view). Additionally, the linguistic organization of literary texts is shown to be a great contribution to interpretation (Leech's view) while formal appearance of literary works can also be considered to be of utmost as influence for the reader's interpretation. For each of these analytic approaches (semantic, linguistic and formal) few practical examples are presented from both English and Persian literature, while to the author's best knowledge, these three types of analysis are Not Mutually Exclusive But Highly Interactive.

## 2. Literature review

### 1.1 Language, Text and Context

Nowottny (1962) wrote about the need to shift the analysis of literature away from the context-free, language-free analysis of many of the New Critics towards a more methodically/linguistically-aware analysis that recognized what Spitzer (1954) had been said years before, that "literature is language". Nowottny, as a teacher and writer in the 1950s and 1960s influenced a great many academics who continue to write about the language(s) of literature. In 1962 she published her most influential work, *The Language Poets Use*. Her concern is with what she called the "staple components of language" and "the interaction between the corporeality of words (as systematized in poems) and the meanings they bear". Central to this concern is the primacy of metaphor, which she develops from the formalist school as signaling the distinctive, poetic function of literature (Thompson, 1971). Her theorizing of language and style never moves beyond a concentration on the supremacy of words; she believed firmly that these words somehow "contain" meanings, and she argued for maintaining a formalist distinction between poetic and non-poetic language as a means of defining literature. Style, for Nowottny as for many critics, is effectively language manipulated in ways that signal it as different from "ordinary" language. She has written:

…the value of examining objective characteristics carefully, before talking at large about the imaginative constructs reared on the foundation of words, is that this results, at least, in a recognition of the part played by the corporeality of words, and by the structures which connect them, not only in determining lesser poetic effects but also in directing the larger mental and imaginative processes activated by the poem; it may well lead, further, to a recognition of the fact that the various elements of poetic language interpenetrate one another with an intimacy which is of first importance in any consideration of how poetry "works". (Nowottny, 1962, p. 2)

Engaging with Leavis (1936), Nowottny (1962) pointed out that the good critic is "not one who strips the layers off the onion one after another until there is nothing left inside" (Nowottny, 1962, p. 19), but someone who integrates these layers. For Nowottony (1962), as for other socially-oriented functional linguists, it is crucial to discuss the situations in which a

text is produced. In other words, the situational meanings as well as the "internal" meaning are crucial parts of the analysis. This places a focus on meaning which is quite alien to the descriptivist linguistics of highly influential academics like Bloomfield (1971) whose attempts to make language study a science, divorced from the tricky problem of meanings, were considered to be his greatest contribution to the study of language. Winter (1965) recognized the problem when, in 1965 he wrote, "If we want our grammar…to account for all that actually occurs in a natural language, we must be content to live with the messiness that goes with it." (Winter, 1965, p. 488)

*1.2 Entering the Text*

Empson's (1951) objections were directed at the sort of view which argued that the text and its language should become transparent to its referents in order to establish an unwavering truth or as Richards (1970) argued to establish a separate emotive language that defined literary value. Literature thus was defined as a special, unique process of knowledge; literature, because of its forms like paradox and irony, shifts a normal, ordinary perception away from its usual everyday meaning into a new, unique perception. And this, more than anything else in intrinsic practice, is formalism at its highest mode. In such a view, above all, lay the grounds for Empson's fears that rational and methodical approaches to criticism and knowledge were being swept away by the neo- Christianity of the Anglo-American New Critics and were replaced by irrational formalist theories of literature and language that drilled students into "an attitude of religious or political orthodoxy" as a means of preventing all the students from becoming communists (Norris, 1985, p. 37).

Empson's (1951) analysis was set firmly in what might be called a ethodist tradition (in its sense both of adherence to a method of analysis and of non-conformity), which viewed language in more or less the same light as had the eighteenth-century rationalist grammars. This view of language saw literature as being realized, for the most part, through its diction. A good knowledge of traditional grammar (based mostly on the Latin taught at schools—a requirement for university entrance in Empson's time) and a good dictionary were basically all the analytic tools needed. Spitzer (1948) another important critic for his emphasis on the importance of language in analyzing literary text, had related, yet somewhat different, priorities. He wrote,

…the best document of the soul of a nation is its literature, an since the latter is nothing but its language as this is written down by elect speakers, can we perhaps not hope to grasp the spirit of a nation in the language of its outstanding works of literature.(Spitzer, 1948, p. 10)

This contained a familiar elitist approach to the relationship of literature and the spirit of the nation, but it places a quite different emphasis on the role of language. He advocated a position contrary to much of the positivist/historicist criticism of the timeless, placeless philology of the older school that dominated university literary studies and also tried to develop a critical practice that suggested that critics should treat a text *synchronically,* by working from the surface of a text to its "inward life-center" and then, on arrival at the center to integrate the details of analysis into "the creative principle which may have been present in the soul of the artist" (Spitzer, 1948, p. 12). Once this is done, the reader then makes the

return trip to the surface of the text. This means that the analysis begins on an intuitive observation which in turn raises a question about textual meaning that then requires an answer.

Spitzerian analysis begins with an intuition, an inspiration about the text, usually based on some small details. This enables analysts to form a relationship with the text. Spitzer speaks of it as a "click", and when that click occurs it signals that detail and whole have found a common denominator. Years later Hartman (1970) described this process of beginning interpretation as being like a football game; "the reader spots a hole and goes through' (Hartman, 1970, p. 351). The argument, therefore, is that for every text the critic needs a separate inspiration in order to get a way into the text, and then the critic will find the things which are meant to be discovered. In that respect this approach is classically traditional, arguing that there are "secrets/treasures" of literature to be uncovered. The treasures cannot be recovered unless the critic is sensitive/violent enough to get the entrance to the text. Spitzer wrote:

Literature holds secrets that it will give up, but only if you "prove" yourself worthy. …the critic, in order to keep his soul ready for his scholarly task, must have already made choices in ordering his life, of what 1 would call a moral nature; he must have chosen to cleanse his mind from distraction by the inconsequential, from the obsession of everyday small details—to keep it open to the synthetic apprehension of the "wholes" of life, to the symbolism in nature and art and language. (Spitzer, 1949, p. 29)

Here is an impassioned argument that literary/emotive intuition provides a precious means for entering the text for the reader or even the critic. It is also implied that analysis of literary texts by linguistic means is not a brutalizing of a work of art, but a worthwhile intellectual pursuit that sees the text as a series of clues to understanding significance beyond language; beyond what the words of the text mean.

*1.3 Literary Language and Literariness*

One of the reasons for the widespread suspicion of a close reading that does attempt to be linguistically analytic, for either linguistic or literary reasons, is the concern for the "sanctity" of literary language. Sawyer (1985), in his book *Ruskin's Poetic Argument,* is interested in understanding that sanctity in a way that would allow him to argue for the contributions that Ruskin, as art critic, has made to literature. In order to do that, he appropriates a critical practice that he thinks suitable.

Blake (1983) assumed an understanding of "literariness" when he talked about the difference between poetic imagery and flat language. Carter and Nash addressed this issue very thoroughly in a paper entitled "Language and literariness" ( Carter & Nash, 1983), arguing that to polarize language as either literary or non-literary leads to the assigning of values to particular kinds of language, valorizing the literary against the non-literary (Carter & Nash, 1983, p. 123–4). An alternative to this, they suggest, is that language should be seen in terms of a gradation or "cline", which makes it possible to find elements of literariness in languages which would usually be defined as ordinary/non-literary.

Eagleton (1983), in his book *Literary Theory,* wrote:

If someone comes up to you at the bus stop and murmurs "Thou still unravished bride of quietness", you are in the presence of the literary if*,* that is, your theory of literature is defined in the formalist terms of a language functioning "in excess of its abstractable meaning". I would suggest you were in the presence of something far more sinister than literature! But the point is that one of the major means of defining what constitutes literature is based on defining a particular variety of language as literary/ poetic. (p. 2)

The argument receives its fullest statement in the scientificity of Russian Formalism and Prague School linguistics, mainly through Jakobson (1960) and Muka ovský (1964). Literariness *(literaturnost)* is considered to be the object of the science of literature, and not the text, writer, reader, genre, or literature generally. The *forms* of literature, therefore—its devices—are prioritized, whereas the content itself is not. Form is considered to condition content. This approach receives its most trivializing Formalist statement in Edmund Epstein's (1978) *Language and Style.* In discussing Yeats' *Who Goes With Fergus?* Epstein writes: "…it contains a great many repetitions of sound and stress, many more than would occur in casual speech. This, when noted by the reader, identifies it as a poem" (Epstein, 1978, p. 14).

ovský (1970) argued that literary language is "an aesthetically purposeful distortion of standard language" such that literature *foregrounds* its language, that is, it calls attention to itself through its *forms*. Hartman (1969) is concerned with developing an awareness of the importance of language and structures in literary texts from a contemporary theoretical perspective that is more concerned with literature as a site of ideological and philosophical struggles than it is with the personality, ideas, or beliefs of an author. The text is therefore a springboard to develop a theoretical position about a particular literary phenomenon.

Hartman (1969) used as a frame for his ideas here a phrase from a lost play by Sophocles, recorded by Aristotle in the *Poetics*. Literature is not, for Hartman (and many others, critics and linguists alike) the same as any other discourse. It draws attention to itself. How it draws attention to itself is what makes a literary text a crucial arrangement of words. What Hartman did for literary analysis is finding a vocabulary, in literary terms, for *how* literature is literature. And he constructs a critical practice—a hermeneutics— using the sounds and silences of the text to create a vocabulary for understanding literary texts in literary ways.

## 2. How to Practice Linguistic-Based Literary Criticism

*2.1 Linguistic Technique of Analysis*

Reading a poem is like walking on silence—on volcanic silence. We feel the historical ground; the buried life of words. Like fallen gods, like visions of the night, words are erectile. (Hartman, *Beyond Formalism,* pp. 341–2).

Though Hartman (1969) might not have put it quite this way, Empson's position in *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930) and *The Complex Structure of Words* (1951), suggested that as readers, we are able to engage with choices of meaning in a text, recognition of which comes from our linguistic and literary competences. Such engagement requires a skill with

understanding grammatical structures, a skill with words, a skill with literary effects, a skill with meanings, and a skill with language analysis. While such skills may not account for total meaning in a text (a requirement of other critics), for Empson (1951) they go a long way towards explaining why a reader reacts in a particular way to a text. More significantly, perhaps, such skills give readers a vocabulary in which to discuss their intuitions about a text—something that became increasingly important for him in the wake of his objections to most of the new critical practices.

Typically linguistic techniques of stylistic analysis are inspired with these key concepts;

A. **Phonetics and phonology** brings about conscious/unconscious results through intentional frequent usage of fricatives, affricatives, liquids, plosives, voiced and voiceless consonants and short or long vowels for interpreting the literary pieces.

B. **Syntactic structures** (breaking the ordinary syntactic rules, replacing different parts of the sentence) in addition to sentence length (whether the sentence are short or long) are determining factors for stylistic analysis.

C. **Modality and pronominalization** (where proper nouns are replaced with vague pronouns) are poetic devices through which the author orientation becomes clear.

D. **Rhyming** choices are determining for the message conveyance believing in that each rhyme has its own capabilities.

Linguistic approach of literary analysis requires skill and training, knowledge of linguistic and literary structures, and recognition of the crucial importance of language in literary texts. In the following a linguistic-inspired analysis of one of Thomas's (1943) pieces of prose is presented. This analysis has discoursal, phonetical and morphological concerns;

And the shrill girls giggle and master around him and squeal as they clutch and trash, and the blubbers away downhill With his patched pants falling, and his tear-splashed blush burns all the way as the triumphant bird-like sisters scream with the buttons in their claws and the bully brothers hoot after hi, his little nickname and his mother's shame and his father's wickedness While the loose wild barefoot women of the hovels of the hills. It all means nothing at all, and, howling for his milky mum, for her cawl and buttermilk and cow breath and Welsh cakes and the fat birth-smelling bed and moonlit kitchen of her arms, he'll never forget as he paddles blind home through the Weeping end of the World. Then his tormentors tussle and run to the Cockle Street sweep-shop, their pennies sticky as honey, to buy from Miss My funwy Price, who is cocky and

neat as a puff-bosomed robin **and** her small round buttocks tight as ticks, gobstopper big as wens

that rainbow as you such, brandy balls, wine gumes, hundreds **and** thousands, liquoring sweet as

sick, nougat to tug **and** ribbon out like another red rubbery tongue, gum to glue in girls curls,

crimson cough drops to spit blood, ice-cream cornets, dandelion-and-burdock, raspberry **and**

cherryade, pop goes the Weasel **and** the Wind.

This piece of writing from Thomas (1943) strongly conveys the sense of dissatisfaction and uneasiness of the protagonist from his present circumstances and his critical views toward the people toward him (may be his family), in particular. Through these lines the author some sort of anger or depression which is reinforced by his angry and/or humiliating tone of the text. The recurrent linguistic features such as long non-stop sentences (repetition of and), intentional usage of fricative, plosive and voiced consonants, long and hyphenated adjectives, usage of colloquial words and expressions, usage of short vowels repeatedly and alliterative use of language remarkably affects the readers sensations while the author describes the surrounding people. In the following the frequent linguistic features of the text are presented,

1)  <u>And:</u>   the whole text consists of only three sentences. The author chained different clauses with "and" which shows his incoherent mind. These non-stop utterances may show protagonist's fear and obsessive anger toward the people he describes. "And"s are distinguished with bold face type through the text.

2)  <u>Consonants:</u> the proportion of "fricative" consonants (fricatives are consonants with the characteristics that when they are produced air stream escapes through a small passage and make a hissing sound like f, v, t, d, s, z, sh, and h) to liquid consonants are remarkable. Furthermore, "voiced" consonants are far more recurrent the "voiceless" consonants. These factors enhance the strength of the protagonist's objection and its excruciating quality (all three sentences are terminated with voiced fricatives). "Fricatives" are in italicized. Additionally, "plosive" consonants (for their articulation air stream blocks and suddenly releases like t, d, k, g) are good instruments in author hands for showing his stress and anger (they represent some sort of explosion). The author may try to release his anger by applying "plosives" recurrently. "Plosives" are underlined. Generally speaking, the combination of these consonants depicts the chaotic, frustrating and violent atmosphere of the story.

3)  <u>Long adjectives:</u>   there are many hyphenated adjectives through the text (tear-splashed, bird-like, birth-smelling, sweep-shop, poff-bosomed) which seem to be coined by the author himself. Long adjectives intensify the strength of the text and decrease the melody it. In better words, the beauty of the text becomes subservient to its purpose. These long adjectives are harmonious with long sentences and effectively convey the sense of anger and dissatisfaction.

4) <u>Colloquial expressions:</u> the use of colloquial words and expressions (particularly welsh) make the text least formal and brings the atmosphere of everyday life to it. The whole text is not an attempt to direct the reader's attention to a sublime philosophical truth but it is an ordinary hackneyed objection of an adolescent to his surroundings.

5) <u>Alliteration:</u>   to me, here, alliterative use of language makes the text more influential and rhythmic. Repetition of particular sounds (particularly fricatives and plosives) may depict the obsession of the protagonist about his annoying context. Alliterative sounds are shown by larger fonts through the text.

6) <u>Vowels:</u> the proportion of short vowels to long ones is considerable which results in an increase in reading of the text. Short vowels may relate to authors short temper. Less long vowels help frustrating consonants show themselves more easily. In better words, vowels are lost amongst strong consonants. The text starts with a short vowel and ends with another short vowel but there are some long vowels in between which gave rhythm to the text.

7) <u>Rhythm:</u> the existence of alliteration and vowel patterning (a long vowel after 5 or 6 short vowels) gives rhyme to the text (squeal---- scream, downhill ----hills, howl-----cawl, mum----arm, nickname-----shame, etc.). Although it is a prose but it is replete with rhythmic words which reinforce the impression the author desires on the reader.

Thomas (1943) claimed that his poetry was "the record of my individual struggle from darkness toward some measure of light.….to be stripped of darkness is to be clean, to strip of darkness is to make clean." He also wrote that his poems with all their crudities, doubts, and confusions, are written for the love of man and in praise of God, "and I'd be a damned fool if they weren't". Passionate and intense, vivid and violent, Thomas wrote that he became a poet because "I had fallen in love with words." His sense of the richness and variety and flexibility of the English language shines through all of his work. Thomas was passionately dedicated to his "sullen art," and he was a competent, finished, and occasionally complex craftsman. He made, for example, more than two hundred versions of "Fern Hill" before he was satisfied with it. His early poems are relatively mysterious and complex in sense but simple and obvious in pattern. His later poems, on the other hand, are simple in sense but complex in sounds.

In the following section a linguistic approach is applied to a Persian poem entitled *"Thunder-horse"* by to highlight the role of phonology and phonetics in the process of literary analysis;

*(thunder-horse)* سِند صـا عقـه

*Prepare the thunder-horse since you must go)* سِند صـا عقـه زیـن کـن سـو ا ره بـا یـد رفـت

*To the red sky like a star you must go)* عرش شعـله سحر چـون سـتـا ره بـا یـد رفـت

*The alive martyr of love says)* شهیـد زنـده تــا ریـخ عشق مـیگـویـد

*Again to the red execution place you must go)* بـه **د ار سرخ انـا الحق** دوبـازه بـا یـد رفـت

بـگو بـه **يـوسف** انـديـشه اي پـيـمبر دل (*Tell to the Joseph as the prophet of heart)*

بـه **چـاه حـادثـه** هنگـام چـاره بـايـد رفت (*Again go to the well of danger you must)*

گـذشت كـشتی خـورشـيد از جزيـره مـوج (*The sun's ship is passed from the tide's island)*

بـه غرقـه‌گـاه خطر زيـن كنـاره بـايـد رفت (*To the black spot from this path you must go)*

بـپـوش جوشـن آتـش بـه تـن سوار فـلـق (*Wear the fire shield, oh! The rider of dawn)*

كـه در مصـاف خسـان چـون شـراره بـايـد رفت (*To the battle of diminutives like a fire you must go)*

بـه گـوش لالـه خـونـيـن نـسيم عـاشق گفت (*The lover wind told the bloody tulip)*

چو گـل زبـاغ جهـان پـاره پـاره بـايـد رفت (*From the world's garden torn and in pieces you must go)*

شكفتـه در افـق خـاك آفـتـاب يـقـين (*Flourished in the soil the certitude light)*

بـه بـام ديـده بـراي نظـاره بـايـد رفت (*To the roof of your eyes for looking, you must go)*

امـر قـافلـه نـور مـي‌دهـد فـرمـان (*The leader commands that)*

بـه عرصـه‌گـاه شهـادت همـاره بـايـد رفت (*To the martyrdom-spot always you must go)*

رسيد لحظه مـوعود و نـيـست‌گـاه درنـگ (*The determined time is reached there is no time for thinking)*

بـه **قـاف واقـعـه** بـي استخـاره بـايـد رفت (*To the event immediately you must go)*

The main theme of the poem is invitation to martyrdom, necessity of being sacrificed for the sake of country. Accordingly, every other lines end with a forceful imperative "must go" (*bayad raft)*. The poem has such a serious or even an epic tone (to emphasize the need and necessity of going) that force the reader to move. 9 lines out of 18, begin with "to" *(beh)* which show the destinations of this movement. The poem is so highly inspired by Islamic/Persian martyrdom culture that it seems remote for a non-Iranian reader to understand the whole underlying meaning of the poem. These recurrent features are worth referring to;

1) <u>Vocabulary</u>: The choice of diction basically results in two semantic fields; religious terms like "martyr", "Joseph", "prophet", "martyrdom" *(shahid, Yoosof, peyombar, shahadat, estekhareh)* and war and battle-related terms such as "horse", "shield", battle", "chivalry", "war general"(*samand, gharghe gah, joushan, masaf, savar, amir, arse gah*). By combination of these two semantic fields, the poet tries to justify his plea.

2) <u>Poetic devices</u>:

- Allusion; the poem repeatedly alludes to distinguished Islamic/Iranian characters and their stories *(allusion to Mansoor-e-Hallaj, Prophet Joshef, Koohe-e Ghaf)*. These allusions reinforce the transcendental atmosphere of the poem. Allusive parts are bold faced.

- Metaphor and simile; the poem is replete with metaphors and similes. The poem starts with a metaphor (its title) and the usage of metaphor continues to the end. Metaphors and similes are underlined through the poem.

- Alliteration; the poem is strongly alliterative. Intentional repetition of voiced and fricative consonants enhances the epic context of the poem and intensifies the sense of movement.

(3) <u>Consonants:</u> Fricative consonants (sounds like, s, sh, v, d, z) in addition to affricative ones (sounds like, ch) are quite prominent in this poem. Furthermore, plosives (like p, g, k, t, d) play undeniable roles for the poet intent. The use these consonants not only results in the explosion of readers' emotions but also represent the sound of swords in the battlefield; "sh" as a fricative sound (fricatives are consonants with the characteristics that when they are produced air stream escapes through a small passage and make a hissing) is the most frequent sound in this poem which represents the fire context; this fire can be the fire of love or the fire of battle.

(4) <u>Vowels:</u> The frequency of long vowels in comparison of short vowels is considerable. Particularly, the long vowel "a:" is remarkably frequent which may represent a sense of "rebel" in the readers mind. This long vowel is used exactly before the main message of the poem (bayad raft) permanently and is present in all lines of the poem.

*2.2 Semantic Technique of Analysis*

Semantic analysis like linguistic analysis needs knowledge of linguistic intricacies on the part of the reader. Usually semantic analyses are done through the following key notions:

A. **Diction choice_** each poem or literary piece contains key dictions which shows the main focus of the work. These dictions are connected with the related words and create a network though which the message of the work is conveyed.

B. **Contrasts_** semantic networks are usually compared (they create a continuum) to reflect the differences between the focal elements of the literary piece.

C. **Repetitions of images_** semantic networks create images which are repeated throughout the poem but with different wordings.

D. **Poetic devices** are powerful tools in the hand of the author to convey his meaning; symbolism, metaphor, simile, alliteration and allusion and so forth.

Here, a semantic-inspired analysis of one of Larkin's (1955) poems is presented which shows the underlying, buried function of lexicon;

**Lines on a Young Lady's Photograph Album**

At last you yielded up the album, which,
Once open, sent me distracted. All your ages
Matt and glossy on the thick black pages!

Too much confectionery, too rich:

I choke on such nutritious images.

My swivel eye hungers from pose to pose—

In pigtails, clutching a reluctant cat;

Or furred yourself, a sweet girl-graduate;

Or lifting a heavy-headed rose

Beneath a trellis, or in a trilby hat

Faintly disturbing, that, in several ways)—

From every side you strike at my control,

Not least through these disquieting chaps who loll

At ease about your earlier days:

Not quite your class, I'd say, dear, on the whole.

But o, photography! as no art is,

Faithful and disappointing! that records

Dull days as dull, and hold-it smiles as frauds,

And will not censor blemishes

Like washing-lines, and Halls-Distemper boards.

But shows the cat as disinclined, and shades

A chin as doubled when it is, what grace

Your candour thus confers upon her face!

How overwhelmingly persuades

That this is a real girl in a real place,

In every sense empirically true!

Or is it just the past? Those flowers, that gate,

These misty parks and motors, lacerate

Simply by being over; you

Contract my heart by looking out of date.

Yes, true; but in the end, surely, we cry

Not only at exclusion, but because

It leaves us free to cry. We know what was

Won't call on us to justify

Our grief, however hard we yowl across

The gap from eye to page. So I am left

To mourn (without a chance of consequence)

You, balanced on a bike against a fence;

To wonder if you'd spot the theft

Of this one of you bathing; to condense,

In short, a past that no one now can share,

No matter whose your future; calm and dry,

It holds you like a heaven, and you lie

Invariably lovely there,

Smaller and clearer as the years go by.

It seems that Larkin avoids treating his subjects romantically or sentimentally by using a **negative vocabulary**—usually words with negative prefixes or suffixes, for example, *disturbing, disquieting,* and so forth, which, together with negative particles *(not least, not quite)* and words suggesting imperfection *(blemish, frauds),* creates a neutral tone that is reinforced by many words which imply a taking away or holding back, for example, *reluctant, censor, exclusion, condense*.

Larkin's use of words like *faintly disturbing* and *I'd* say gives a colloquial feel to the poem, though there are also poetic uses, like *misty parks* and *heavy-headed rose*. The result is a mixed style which creates a language different from that of ordinary speech but which is not so poetic that it becomes mawkish. Another feature of Larkin's style is **verbal repetition**, which is supported by other kinds of poetic echo, for example, variation of determiners: *the* past, *those* flowers, *that* gate and the repetition of *–ing* which helps to reinforce the link among the negative words in the third and fourth stanzas. **Alliteration**—the repetition of initial consonants—and the repetition of adverbials that occur at the beginning of every line in the third stanza allow Larkin to sidle into his poem, as it were, with a less prominent part of speech.

**Adverbials** also occur in the poem as intensifiers, for example *faintly disturbing, invariably loved,* these provide a suggestion of social exaggeration and pretension which is undercut by the contexts in which they occur. The language of the poem is flat and this is assisted by the absence of much metaphor or imagery, so that the poem can be read in a fairly straightforward manner—the only typically poetic images are the idea of the photograph album as a rich diet and the association of the observer's eye with the camera through the word *swivel*. The active/dynamic verbs refer to the poet and the static ones refer to the pictures, which have an anthropomorphic quality which can affect all who look upon them, for the reminders of a youth that is past wound the readers all.

The **verbs**, for the most part, are in the simple present, which implies something that is continually true, because many of the verbs refer to the pictures and what they portray. The opening stanza, however, begins with a verb in the past tense, and therefore what had started out as a single event expressed in the past *(yielded up)* is transmuted at this stage into something which has a present effect. The fact that all the verbs are in the active mood refers to the poet and indicates the way in which he is the victim of events rather than the originator of them. The participles and other parts of the syntax reinforce the impression created by the simple verbs. The analysis continues along these lines, looking at details of syntax and cohesion before concluding that the moral centre of the poem rests with the reference to *exclusion* in stanza seven, where it is the poet's reaction to the past and our human reaction to

the whole question of life that is in question, for the poem here turns from an *I* to the *we*. However hard we try, we cannot make past and present one….That is why there is no chance of consequence. The poet is left on his own…. The adverbials are thrown into prominence. Past and future are set in opposition…. The grief of the present cannot alter the past.

Here is the semantic-based analysis of the first modern Persian poem (called Phoenix) by the first modern poet of Persian literature, i.e., Yooshij.

## *(Phoenix)* ققـنـوس

*(Phoenix, the well-sung bird, the fame of the universe)* قـقـنـوس، مـرغ خـوشخـوان، آوازه جهـان،

*(Wandering due to blowing of cold winds)* آواره مـانـده از وزش بـادهـای سرد،

*(Over the Kheizaran branch)* بـر شـاخ خیـزران،

*(is seated alone)* بـنشسته است فـرد،

*(Around it other birds on each branch)* بـر گـرد او بـه هـر سر شـاخی پـرنـدگـان.

*(It integrates the lost moans)* او نـالـه هـای گـمشده تـرکیب مـی کـند،

*(From the torn fibers form the hundreds of distant voices)* از رشته هـای پـاره صدهـا صدای دور،

*(In the snows which are like a dark line on the mountain)* در ابـرهـای مـثل خطی تـیـره روی کـوه،

*(The wall of a dreamy building)* دیـوار یک بـنـای خیـالـی

*(Builds. )* مـی سـازد.

*(from the time when the yellowness of sun on the tide)* از آن زمـان کـه زردی خورشید روی مـوج

*(is molten and had risen in the beach)* کـمرنـگ مـانـده است و بـه سـاحل گـرفـته اوج،

*(Jackal's shout and the rural man)* بـانـگ شغـال و مـرد دهـاتـی

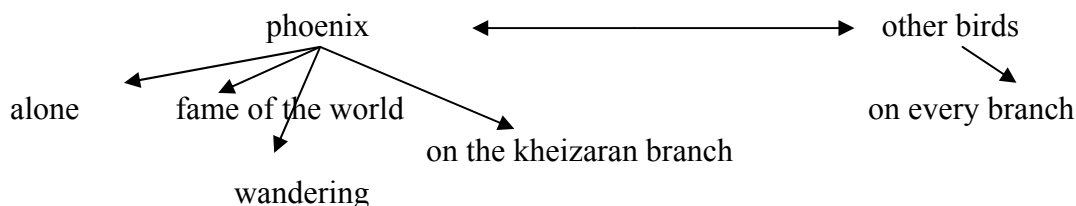*(Has set the hidden fire of the house)* کـرده ست روشن آتـش پـنهـان خـانـه را.

*(red eye, a small spark)* قـرمـز بـه چشم، شعـلـه خردی

*(underline the two great eyes of the night)* خط مـی کشد بـه زیـر دو چشم درشت شب

*(and in distant places)* ونـدر نـقـاط دور

*(People are passing)* خلـقـنـد در عبـور.

The main theme of the poem is the contrast between the modern and the classic Persian poetry. The poem depicts the resistance of Persian poetry for change in that era. The principal message of the poem is expressed through a dichotomous contrast between a phoenix and other birds each with particular attributes;

phoenix ⟷ other birds

alone     fame of the world            on every branch

on the kheizaran branch

wandering

Phoenix refers to the poet himself while other birds are ironically alludes to classic poets or their proponents. Phoenix wants to build a new chant (its aim is building not destruction) in the oppressive conditions. The following poetic devices are noticeable:

1- <u>Symbolism:</u> The poem is replete with symbols;

Symbols for

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| phoenix (*ghoghnoos*) | ⟶ | poet himself |
| mountain (*kooh*) | ⟶ | classic poetry |
| fancy building *(banaye khiali)* | ⟶ | modern poetry |
| rural man (*mard-e-dehati)* | ⟶ | poet himself |
| hidden fire *(atashe penhan)* | ⟶ | modern poetry |
| small fire (*shoaleye khord)* | ⟶ | modern poetry |
| setting sun (*khorshid dar hale ghoroob)* | ⟶ | classic poetry |
| other birds (parandeghane digar) | ⟶ | classic poets |

Symbols which are mostly derived from the natural make the reader decide partially on superiority of phoenix over other birds or victory of fire over darkness.

2- <u>Breaking ordinary syntactic rules</u>: In the beginning sentences of the third stanza, subject once has come at the end, once in the middle and once at the begging of the sentences. This intensifies the main theme of the poem (the poet wants to build something new out of cliché patterns).

3- <u>Pictorial replacement:</u> Images either positive or negative constantly change through the poem; this gives coherence and novelty to the poem.

Pictorial replacement for

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| rural man | ⟶ | poet himself | ⟶ | phoenix |
| passing people | ⟶ | classic poets | ⟶ | other birds |
| hidden fire | ⟶ | modern poetry | ⟶ | fancy building |

This sort of analysis is simple, straightforward, and rests on the main principle that the analyst must examine closely the linguistic choices that have been made for literary reasons by the poet. At stake are both a discussion of the meaning of the poem, and, accordingly, a detailed description of what constitutes the language and style of the writer as literary. Language and style, in analyses such as this, are effectively labels for the more traditional

concept of diction: *what* writers write—and the linguistic choices they make—are as important as the 'meaning' of the text.

### 2.3 Formal technique of analysis

It is worth noting here that sometimes the poet tries to convey his/her message with the aid of visual appreance of the poem which is highly dependent to his/her knowledge of linguistic intricacies. These poems _ ***concrete poems**_* try to direct the reader's attention to particular meaning through a particular scheme. These poems have a history of 400-year in English literature (renaissance literature) but they are treated as modern techniques of meaning conveyance in Persian literature. Design, layout, arrangement and length of lines are of great importance in concrete poems believing in the fact that the poem should be for eye in addition to ear.

Table 1. Difference between classic and concrete poetry

|  | Classic poems | Concrete poetry |
|---|---|---|
| Content | sublime | ordinary |
| Audience | elites and intellectuals | ordinary people |
| Words and language | fixed | manageable as physical realities |
| Building blocks | phonology | graphology |

Here are two examples of concrete poems in English and Persian literature;

**40---------------Love**

| middle | I | aged |
|---|---|---|
| couple | I | playing |
| ten | I | nis |
| when | I | the |
| game | I | ends |
| and | I | they |
| go | I | home. |
| the | I | net |
| will | I | still |
| be | I | be |
| tween | I | them. |

As the title suggests, the poem reflects love at the age 40, simultaneously it refers to result of the tennis match. The main theme of the poem is love attrition and separation which is clearly shown with the format of the poem (11 "I" in a vertical sequence shows the boundary between a previously in love couple which at the same time represents the net in tennis) and separation of some words' parts on two sides of the boundary like *tennis* and *between* or as an

example of Persian concrete poem,

*(Bulldozers)* بـولـدوزرهـا

*(bodies)* *(bury)* بـه خـاك مـی سپـارنـد

بـدن هـای

*(without life)* بـی جـان شده

*(bombs)* بمب هـا را                                             بـا

*(with)*

The poem represents the awful situation after bombardment. The format of the poem is at the service meaning conveyance; it reflects the spread dead bodies as a result of bombardment and simultaneously the fall of bombs. Every word begins with "b" which is a plosive and represents explosion.

## 3. Conclusion

The usage of critical linguistics in literary criticism can be summarized as follows,

➢ The emphasis is on close reading of text. This foregrounds the importance of language and linguistic structures.

➢ Analysis of text therefore requires skill in language, linguistics, rhetoric, and diction. It is effectively analysis of literary texts by linguistic means. Although with analyses on language rather than on literary effects and devices, the view of language is still one that sees language as essentially transparent, an innocent vehicle that 'carries' meaning.

➢ The critic is therefore also considered to be innocent and disinterested, working in a supposedly objective, unbiased way and allowing the formalities of the close reading technique to highlight the meaning of the text encoded into it by the writer, rather than examining the institutionally determined readings of the text.

➢ The consequence of an increased awareness of the importance of language and context in text analysis is an increased recognition that analysis is concerned not just with *what* a text means, but *how* a text 'works'.

➢ These analyses are not language/literature dependent and can be applied for each literary piece in every language.

The concentration on language organization and on the distinctive characteristics of literary/poetic language developed critical practice beyond the narrower confines of close reading with its relatively unsystematic emphasis on rhetoric and diction. Some linguists and critics achieved awareness of the importance of context as well as of the potential pedagogical relevance of linguistically-informed readings of texts. Others, however, saw analysis as a means of developing greater understanding of the system *(langue)* of language, rather than developing a specific interest in and awareness of literature and discourse. The consequences for the analysis of texts were far-reaching, emphasizing and prioritizing in particular the preoccupation for the "scientific" character of twentieth-century structuralism.

Usage of linguistic/semantic techniques of literary analysis necessitates further longitudinal studies. Considering the fact that these techniques are not literature dependent, they are extremely important tools for literary comparative studies.

**References**

Blake, N. F. (1983). Philip Larkin's language and style with reference to "Lines on a Young Lady's Photograph Album". *The Journal of English Language and Literature, 29*(1), 341–50.

Bloomfield, M. (1971). Jakobsonian poetics and evaluative criticism. *The University Review, 38*, 165–73.

Carter, R. A., & Nash, W. (1983). Language and literariness. *Prose Studies, 6*(2), 123–141. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01440358308586190

Eagleton, T. (1983). *Literary Theory: An Introduction.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Empson, W. (1951). *The Structure of Complex Words.* London: Chatto & Windus.

Epstein, E. L. (1978). *Language and Style.* London: Methuen.

Hartman, G. (1969). *The voice of the shuttle: language from the point of view of literature.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/ 2.125534

Jakobson, R. (1960). *Closing statement: linguistics and poetics.* London: Methuen.

Larkin, P. (1955). *The Less Deceived.* London: Marvell Press.

Leavis, F. R. (1936). *Reevaluation.* London: Chatto & Windus.

Leech, G. (1977). Literary criticism and linguistic description. *The Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters, 7(1),* 2–22.

Mukarovský, J. (1964). *Standard language and poetic language*. Garvin publications.

Norris, C. (1985). The importance of Empson (II): the criticism. *Essays in Criticism, 35*(1), 25–44. http://dx.doi.org/ 10.0343506/3.45623

Nowottny, W. (1962). *The Language Poets Use.* London: Athlone Press.

Richards, I.A. (1970). Jakobson's Shakespeare: the subliminal structures of a sonnet. *Times Literary Supplement, 2*8(3), 589–590. http://dx.doi.org./10.498912/0415025257

Ricks C. (1984). *The Force of Poetry.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Sawyer, P. L. (1985). *Ruskin's Poetic Argument: The Design of the Major Works.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Spitzer, L. (1948). *Linguistics and Literary History: Essays in Stylistics.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Spitzer, L. (1954). On Yeats's Poem: Leda and the Swan. *Modern Philology, 51*, 271–276. http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/389017

Thomas, D. (1948). *Collected Poems*. London: Phoenix publications.

Thompson, E. M. (1971). *Russian Formalism and Anglo-American New Criticism.* The Hague: Mouton.

Widdowson, H. J. (1975). *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature.* London: Longman.

Widdowson, P. (1982). *Re-reading English.* London: Methuen.