

REPETITION, SYNONYMY AND PHRASAL COLLOCATION: A STUDY OF LEXICAL COHESION IN THE SELECTED POETRY OF ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

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Abstract

This Research Paper is an attempt to study the features of lexical cohesion in the selected poetry of Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, the Poet Laureate of Great Britain during the reign of Queen Victoria's in 1850 is one of the most popular British poets of his time. His striking choice of diction to emphasize his intended meanings is really insightful. Linguistic devices like lexical repetition, synonymy and phrasal collocation help in creating lexical cohesion for achieving lexical foregrounding in his poetry. We find that deliberate selections of lexical items (words) by a poet usually aim at creating cohesion in poetic language. So far as cohesion is, as Geoffrey Leech defines it, 'a dimension of linguistic stylistic description which is particularly important in the study of literary texts. By this is meant the way in which independent choices in different point of a text corresponds with or presuppose one another, forming a network of sequential relation. 'Lexical cohesion comes about through the selection of items that are related in some way to those that have gone before.' (Halliday: 310) Present paper conducts the study of selected poetry of Tennyson to find out that how has he used lexical repetition, synonymy and phrasal collocation for creating lexical cohesion in his poetry.

Keywords: lexical cohesion, synonymy, foregrounding, phrasal collocation

Introduction

Alfred, Lord Tennyson has been called the representative poet of Victorian age. His striking choice of diction to emphasize his intended meanings is really insightful. Present paper aims at pointing out the significant features of lexical cohesion that are brought about by giving a new insight into the way Tennyson has used language in literature at the level of structure in his poetry. This cannot be explained and justified from grammatical point of view which together with lexis forms the structure of language.

Literature Review

As a general rule anyone who wishes to investigate the significance and value of a work of art must concentrate on the element of interest and surprise, rather than on the automatic pattern. Such deviations from linguistic or other socially accepted norms have been given the special name of foregrounding. (Leech, 1987:57) Foregrounding is that matter of highlighting a linguistic feature which the writer wants to make noticeable. (Rajimwale, 2004:196) It establishes the fact that style is the way, in which a poet uses the linguistic devices in his poetry for making sense of the foregrounding aspect of language. There are linguistic devices which Tennyson has used for creating lexical cohesion to achieve the lexical foregrounding in his poetry like 'Lexical Repetition', 'Synonymy' and 'Phrasal Collocation'. We find that deliberate selections of lexical items (words) by Tennyson usually aim at creating cohesion in his poetic language. So far as cohesion is, as Geoffrey Leech defines it, 'a dimension of linguistic stylistic description which is particularly important in the study of literary texts. By this is meant the way in which independent choices in different point of a text corresponds with or presuppose one another, forming a network of sequential relation. 'Lexical cohesion comes about through the selection of items that are related in some way to those that have gone before.' (Halliday, 1987:310) The major modes of lexical cohesion are repetition, synonymy and collocation.

Lexical Repetition

Repetition is one of the most striking manners of creating lexical cohesion and Tennyson has employed in it numerous ways in his poetry like 'dark, darken and darkness' in this example we find that the inflectional variants of the word dark which occur with a regularity that thickens the semantic significance of the line by referring backwards and forewords in a deftly evolving web of relation.

Though repetition is a linguistic device which can be discussed on the phonic level of language but 'lexical repetition is a direct form of lexical cohesion also in which the repeated items bridge the gap either within or across the sentence by reinforcing the dominant sense in the discourse. (Rajimwale, 2004:204) See a distinctive example of 'lexical repetition' by Tennyson:

Than had we never sworn. I swear no more.

I swore to the great king, and am foresworn.

(The Last Tournament, 655)

In this example the use of the word 'swear' and its inflectional variants 'sworn', 'swore' and 'foresworn' which we encounter occur after every few words in a regularity in the expression enriches the semantic significance when we coincide the word 'swear' by referring backward and forward with other words which Tennyson has skillfully evolved in the web of relations. See the following examples:

Yet we twain

Had never kiss'd a kiss or vow'd a vow.

(The Holy Grail, 582)

To pestle a poison'd poison behind his crimson lights.

(Maud, Part-I, 44)

Use of lexis in this manner can also indicate a simple and extremely restricted style, with little ability to use abstract terms or term related to the thing described. But Tennyson's use of lexical repetition as we find in above examples leaves a special poetic effect on readers' mind because words that are used are identical yet different in their function or role. See one more example:

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the love she bore

No-she never loved me truly; love is love for evermore.

(Locksley Hall, 73)

In above example when we read the word 'love' it tolls like a bell in our mind after every few words, though it is random repetition of the word 'love' and every word in this example contributes in making sense of the meaning, moreover, helps in creating lexical cohesion. Now see this example:

Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn

The love of love

(The Poet, 3)

Here we find that Tennyson has not only created cohesion by repeating the lexical items like 'hate', 'scorn' and 'love' but also enriched the meaning on semantic level.

Lexical Synonymy

Repetition is not the only way cohesion is created by Tennyson in his poetic language he has used lexical synonymy and collocation also to create foregrounding at lexical level. 'Lexical synonymy means same meaning different form.' Synonymy refers to 'similarity' or 'sameness of meaning'. 'Rather than repeating the same lexical item, a poet is often seen to use 'related words' with similar meaning or 'synonyms' in order to retain cohesion.' (Rajimwale, 2004:205) See this example:

If he waken, we waken,

Rapidly levelling eager eyes.

If he sleep, we sleep,

Dropping the eyelid over the eyes.

(The Hesperides, 59)

Here in this example we find a kind of repetition where repetition is there of some words but we see that cohesion results in the use of related terms like we find a link among 'waken', 'eyes', 'sleep' and 'eyelid' etc. These words help in creating cohesion in text because of the quality of being related to one another. Once Tennyson departs from the straight forward repetition, he takes the account of cohesion between related items, therefore, it is useful to distinguish whether the references are identical or not. See this example:

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,

(Ulysses, 22)

In this example Tennyson has used the words like 'pause' and 'end' to emphasize an expression though these words don't denote some meaning with different form because 'pause' means 'to stop for some time' and 'end' means 'to finish or complete' but they are identical because both refer to break synonymously. It is obvious that in considering synonymy 'emotive' or 'cognitive' import has critical role, as these words are capable of replacing each other in any given context without the slightest change either in cognitive or emotive import. They have strong emotional or associative significance as we find in the case of above example 'pause' and 'end'. See one more example of synonymy:

In yearning that can never be exprest

By signs or groans or tears;

(A Dram of Fair Women, 283)

In this example by Tennyson has used the words like 'signs', 'groans' and 'tears' and we can easily find that similarity between these words is more striking than difference. The suggestiveness of ideas drawn from the used word makes them synonymous. Their synonymy is cognitive not emotive. They denote the same thing emotionally but in connotation they differ significantly. See the example:

Like souls that balance joy and pain,

With tears and smiles from heaven again

(Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere, 1)

Here also in this example Tennyson has used synonymous words like 'joy' and 'smiles', and 'pain' and 'tears' and because their central or denotative meanings are same that is why they are synonymous. We find that with the help of suggestiveness created by the use of synonym words Tennyson could create foregrounding in the structure of language.

Collocation

Like synonymy, 'collocation' is also a significant stylistic category. In it 'certain items tend to occur close to each other, and share a wide semantic range of association. 'Collocation' is an important concept of stylistic description in poetry, which recognizes the association of a lexical item with other lexical items. Collocations are actual words in habitual company. J.R.Firth (1957), a leading figure in British linguistics during the 1950s, summarized the approach with the memorable line: 'You shall know a word by the company it keeps'.....'and what he calls keeping company is what we know by collocation.'(Rajimwale, 2004:145)

We can enlist a large number of the examples of collocation used by Tennyson to create lexical cohesion in his poetical language. See the example:

“.....Look, her hand is red!

There be no rubies, this is frozen blood,

(The Last Tournament, 411)

As Sharad Rajimwale says, 'Collocation refers to the bond of semantic relation created by words of common semantic values and they tend to co-occur always. In a passage, the related words may be separated over considerable distance, yet the cohesive bond is thrown across and a unity of sense is produced. (2004: 205) In above given example the collocation of 'red', 'rubies' and 'blood' shows textual or structural cohesion because they all are related to the same idea 'red colour'.

'Collateral- range' is established by collocates (related words) that constitutes the list of collocations. So if we identify 'red' as central item then all the other words in the close range such as 'rose', 'cherry', 'tomato', 'blood', 'red ink' etc. would be its collocates and bigger the 'Collateral- range' of 'red' would be if used together.

Tennyson has also created cohesion by producing a sense of unity through related words which donate same ideas. See this example:

And that dear voice, I once have known,
Still speak to me of me and mine.

(In Memoriam, 12)

In this example we can find that even where there is a relation of synonymy between lexical items, cohesive effect tends to depend more on collocation, a simple tendency to co-occur. A set of synonymous words not properly collocated may fail to bring about cohesion. 'Collocation makes us build our expectation of what is to come next.' 'Collocation' is a term which 'refers to the habitual or expected co-occurrence of words'. This is a reference to the fact that words frequently occur in grouping which have a degree of predictability. (Rajimwale, 2004: 206)

In the poetry of Tennyson we find a large number of collateral associations as Carter makes use of the notion of 'collocation', a term which 'refers to the habitual or expected co-occurrence of words.' We see a strong connection between words used by Tennyson in these examples like 'night and day', 'joy and pain'; 'life and death'; 'good and ill', 'now and then', 'flesh and blood', 'death and birth', 'sooner and later' etc. in his poetry. All these examples are the cases of extreme predictability of occurrence by Tennyson in his poetry and thereby serve as a tool for creating cohesion in his poetry.

Conclusion

The forgoing discussion may serve as an introduction to the lexical choices made by Tennyson in his poetry for creating lexical cohesion. We find that the stylistic significance of Tennyson's poetry lies in the selection and arrangement of lexical items for creating foregrounding with the help of linguistic devices like lexical repetition, synonymy and collocation thereby achieving cohesion in his poetry. Usage of these linguistic devices in a particular manner make us mark the Tennysonian Style in his poetry.

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