

Implications of Roman Jakobson's Functions of Language in Identifying the Postcolonial Issues in the Select (Selected) Short Stories of Khushwant Singh: A Corpus Based Stylistic Study

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Abstract

The present paper attempts to bring to light the use of corpus software *AntConc* as a tool to analyze and interpret the various linguistic aspects of Khushwant Singh's short stories- "Mr. Kanjoos and the Great Miracle", and "A Town Called Alice" to uncover the miscellaneous postcolonial issues such as search for identity, cultural clash, colonialism, racialism, impacts of displacements, psychological trauma, power, politics which are viewed in the hegemonic relationships. Here Roman Jakobson's six functions of language such as referential, poetic, conative, phatic, emotive, and metalingual are also employed to bring out the postcolonial stylistic features of the short stories. The endeavor of Khushwant Singh as a postcolonial writer is illuminated by the hybridized use of the English language in a creative and innovative manner suited to the various motives of the short stories. As an act of dissidence, Khushwant Singh's use of hybridized language or Hinglish instead of English acclaims his sense of freedom from the linguistic hegemony of the colonial English. Apart from this, various appropriation devices propounded by Braj B. Kachru and Bill Ashcroft et al such as glossing, translation, use of untranslated words, syntactical fusions, neologism, calques, proficiency levels in the uses of English and englishes according to different class, culture and society, code mixing and code switching etc. are given due consideration which further help in illustrating the functions of language to point out the Post Colonial issues in the short stories.

Keywords: Corpus, Functions of Language, Appropriation Devices, Post Colonialism, and Hybridization.

Stylistics is concerned with the style of language which itself implies the particular linguistic choices made by a writer/poet in context to themes or any socio economic, political, cultural, temporal/ spatial background. Here an effort is made to exploit all linguistic resources of phonemic, morphemic, syntactic, and semantic aspects of a language for the

interpretation and the analysis of a literary text. Stylistics, according to Peter Barry, is “a critical approach which uses the methods and findings of the science of linguistics in the analysis of literary text ... its aim is to show how the technical linguistic features of a literary work, such as the grammatical structure of its sentences, contribute to its overall meanings and effects” (196). Matter and manner are inseparable parts of a text where linguistic expressions are counted as a part of idiolect or parole in which an individual’s particular use of linguistic categories mark the stylistic significance of the text.

Postcolonial issues such as hegemonic relationship, cultural clash, search for identity as well as use of various devices of appropriation can be best illustrated by analyzing the language in the context of a literary text in which a writer/ poet tends to present anxiety as well as ambivalence in dealing with the issues of identity, and power relation between the oppressor and the oppressed one. There needs to put shoulder to wheels to shift the center of monolithic belief system of the colonizers in creating the identities and social roles by using the appropriated or hybridized language specific to the culture of the natives in the postcolonial situations. Among the postcolonial issues, there are also the evidences of resentment or abrogation among the authors in handling the native issues with the foreign or imposed language as it makes them handicapped/ helpless in dealing with exact presentation of their identities, social, and cultural issues.¹²

Corpus is a collection of written material about a subject stored on a computer so that the material can be best viewed, analyzed, and interpreted by using software such as *Wordsmith* or *AntConc*. The corpus software allows one to find the phonemic and the lexical repetitions, collocations, phrases repetitions, neologism, syntactical fusions and several cohesive or cohesion links throughout the text which are found not in isolation but in relation to one another which further mark the stylistic significance of a particular author dealing with the language in context to highlighting the various issues.

Next we have Jakobson’s six functions of language: referential, emotive, conative, phatic, poetic, and metalingual. The aforementioned functions of a language can be applied to any discourse and the knowledge of these help us better understand the various nuances of the dialectical relationship or the interplay of a text and its context.

According to Jakobson, the referential function of a language deals with the context of the message. Here, the meaning needs contextual or explicit knowledge for the complete

understanding of the message. It is denotative in nature and presents information, facts and things and marks various registers employed in the message.

The emotive function of a language focuses on the addresser and his/her attitude towards the message. It generally deals with the addresser's expressions of his/her feelings and emotions dealing with the message and addressee. It concentrates on how the message is delivered on the part of the addresser.

The conative function deals with the addressee. It includes commands, orders, directives and other imperatives which are oriented towards the addressee from the addresser in the message of a text.

The phatic function of a language deals with the contact between the addresser and the addressee. It doesn't provide any information rather establishes a link among the speakers. It includes comments, remarks, and enquiry about health, weather, well being, wishes etc. so that the speakers can further move their talks or start their talks to make social relations with others.

The poetic function of a language concentrates only on the message itself and looks for the arrangement of words while taking into account alliteration, assonance, consonance as well as the deviations and other foregrounding elements such as symbolism, parallelism, repetitions etc.

The metalingual function of a language corresponds to the code of the message. It refers to the language itself. Here the language is used to talk about language such as asking for definitions or word meanings or repeating/ glossing the statements in case to check whether the speaker uses the same code or not.

Let's see how the aforementioned functions of a language are applied to Khushwant Singh's short stories- "Mr. Kanjoos and the Great Miracle" and "A Town Called Alice". So, after looking at the referential function of the texts, we can find that in the beginning of the short story "A Town Called Alice" numerous descriptions of the geographical, natural, demographical and historical features of the land are given by the narrator which provide the setting and the background of the short story. For example, "IF you put your finger in the centre of Australia it will almost certainly be on a town called Alice Springs" (Singh 81), "Alice has a population of less than 5000 souls. It has no pretensions to beauty. It lies in a

dust-bowl ringed by a range of barren hills of shaky red sand-stone” (81) and “Fifty years ago the only humans that inhabited this bleak land were nomadic aboriginal tribesmen—the Aranda, Pitinjara and Pintubi, hunting iguana and Kangaroo with spear and boomerang” (82). All the referential descriptions allow the readers to form a perception about the land called *Alice* and use an informal register to present the information. A lot of natural imagery used in the story makes the reader feel as if they are looking, and feeling the natural surroundings of the small town of Australia. Its natural significance is also fostered by the historical description of many invasions in the town for its beauty and natural resources. Thus, all these guide and make up reader’s mind for the upcoming events against the referential background of the short story.

Next is the emotive function which is directed towards the addresser or the narrator or the speaker of the message. For example, when the narrator approaches the old man and informs him that he belongs to India, the old man becomes surprised and says, "Eh, what you doing 'ere?" (84). And when the narrator tells him that he has come to see him from India. The old man becomes lost in thoughts when he says “*Hamara Watan*” (83), but very soon he doubts and says, "See me?"(84). As no one has visited him for a long time and most of his friends are dead now, he says in regret, "All my companions are dead and gone, only a few half-castes remain" (84). And at last when the narrator advises the old man to return to India or Pakistan, he becomes angry and replies "This is my home; these are my people....This land gave my livelihood and. I will sleep in this land. I will not be a namak-haram. I am a dinkum Aussie" (84). Thus, a sense of loneliness and loss of belongingness caused by the displacement from the native country is clearly witnessed from the emotive speeches of the old man as even in his old times he is no longer willing to leave the place as the fear of the loss of identity permeates in his last speeches. At the same time, we have a sense of ambivalence in the speeches of the old man which is clearly witnessed in use of Hindi untranslated words/phrases such as “*Hamara Watan*”(83), “namak-haram” (84) and the local dialect of *Alice* “dinkum Aussie” (84).

After emotive, comes the conative function of the language which is directed towards the addressee. Here in the short story “A Town Called Alice”, we can find a lot of conative expressions such as imperatives, and vocatives/ directives which direct the reader to act according to the speaker/ narrator so that the desired effect can be achieved by controlling the readers’ perception to feel and see as what the speaker/ narrator wants. For example, “IF you

put your finger in the centre of Australia it will almost certainly be on a town called Alice Springs" (81), "Then stay for dinner. Roti shoti khao"(84), and "I was called at the Old Man's Home and was shown to a small one-roomed villa" (83). In the first example, the narrator wants the reader to locate the town by placing finger on the map of Australia. In the second example, the old man wants the narrator to stay for the dinner and the last example shows that the narrator was prompted by someone to meet the old man.

Next is the phatic function of the text which is directed towards the contact among the characters of the short story and it allows the reader to see the social/ personal relationship between them. In the present short story, we have many examples of the phatic function of a language such as "Salam Alaikum"(83), "Salam, salaam, kidhar se aye?" (83), and "What you doing in Alice?"(83). When the narrator greets, the old man recognizes him to be a Hindustani or Pakistani and an intimacy is built between the two strangers belonging to the same culture and the old man also responds in the native language very cordially to the narrator, but the existing culture overpowers him and demands the narrator to respond in English instead of Hindi by asking the question in the English language.

Next is the turn of the poetic function of a language which concentrates on the message itself. Here in the present short story, we have examples of repetition, and alliteration. For example, "Salam, salaam" (83), and "Roti shoti khao" (84). These give not only the musical quality to the text but also the intensity to the motive of the short story. Here the duplication of sound in Hindi marks the intimacy with the native land.

Looking at the metalingual function of the text, we find an example when Saeed Alam says, "There is no one in this place to recite the *Fatiha* over my body" (84). Here reciting *Fatiha* acts as a metalingual function and marks the Muslim cultural motive of the text. As in a Muslim culture when a person dies there must be the recitation of *Fatiha* which he would hardly get in the town named *Alice*. Thus, cultural shock or clash becomes a worry for the old man in his last days.

Looking at the appropriated words we get a lot of untranslated Urdu words such as "Allah", "Hindustaan", "Salam Alaikum", "Watan", "fatiha", and "namak-haram" which are used side by side with the English words and at last give it the impression of an appropriated or the hybridized language. These words prompt the reader to gloss their meaning suited to

the culture presented in the discourse and marks the win over the struggle of using the imposed language in a creative manner.

Approaching the next short story “Mr. Kanjoos and the Great Miracle”, we find the referential function of a language which is directed towards the context in the short story. Here, almost every paragraph begins with the referential note of the text which creates a background/ context of the short story and allows us to see the relationship of the setting with the thematic significance of the text. There are references to Mr. Kanjoos` personality traits, habits, place, events, talks, actions, time, facts, etc. which provide an additional information for the better understanding of the context. For example, "Krishna said, 'the greatest miracle is that although man knows his end is certain, he never entertains the thought of death'" (85) (Reference to the old saying to mark the personal/informal register), “As my husband is always saying, you cannot take it with you. Eat, drink and be merry is our motto” (85) (Reference to the personality traits of Mr. Kanjoos), “The next time we met at the club we had a few rounds of Scotch” (88) and “During the day while Mr. Kanjoos attended meetings and Mrs. Kanjoos looked after the delegation's correspondence, the little Kanjooses imbibed European culture by visiting picture galleries and museums where there was no charge for admission” (89) (Reference to the time), “Mr. Kanjoos was more generous than I” (89) (Reference to the fact), “The Kanjooses and I were lodged in the same hotel” (89) (Reference to the place), “The Kanjooses were always together in the evenings” (90) (Reference to the habit and fact), “The Kanjooses' entry into the cocktail reception fell into a pattern” (90) (Reference to the event) and ““If you offer a drink, you must be generous,” remarked Mr. Kanjoos sticking his thumbs inside his braces”” (87) (reference to the socio code of conduct). The reference to the Hindu belief system like the saying of Lord Krishna as well as the reference of the cocktail party hint at the hybridized postcolonial culture and create an environment of the coming cultural shocks in the short story. Apart from this, the name of the protagonist i.e. Mr. Kanjoos which is the untranslated version of Hindi word which means ‘miser’ creates a cultural link with India/ Hindi. It marks the linguistic appropriation technique in handling of the Standard English and calls for the nativized/ indianized utilization of Hinglish instead of English. Thus, the referential or the contextual function of the short story acts as a backbone for the complete comprehension of all the fabrics of the thematic aspects of the short story.

Approaching the emotive functions of the present text of the short story which is oriented towards the speaker or the addressor, we find an element of surprise when the unnamed narrator surprisingly remarks, "How absurd that a man as generous should have a name like that! How many people invite a stranger for a meal?" (86). This acts as a kind of ironic reversal for the narrator by the sudden realization of the true character of Mr. Kanjoos and hints the coming events of the short story. Another emotive element found in the short story is the use of the tag question which Mrs. Kanjoos implies for approval as "'I remember this Club in the 1930s," she said. "There were a dozen parties every night. Why, we used to have at least one or two every week ourselves, didn't we, darling?"' (87). Again an element of surprise arises when Mr. Kanjoos chides the narrator for his payment of the bill and shows disapproval and annoy as he says, "What! You've signed for the whole lot!" (88). In the same way, the other elements of surprise expressed by the addresser are as follows- "What else does one live for, I ask!" (94), "I had stood them their first drink, I ordered the second round. And why not? I couldn't take my money with me!" (85), "What is the point of carrying coals to New Castle!" (89), and "they hadn't seen Mrs. Kanjoos but wouldn't Mr. Kanjoos join them for a drink!" (90). So, there are seven emotive elements used for the presentation of surprise, sarcasm, annoy etc. to fuel the motive of the story. There are some other surprise elements such as "how a Hindu wedding could take place in the non-Hindu climate of Europe" (92), "how she found one in Bonn, still remains a mystery" (92).

Next to emotive function is the conative function of a language which is directed towards the addressee in the form of imperatives, vocatives and directives. For example, we find command in the following sentences - "'You must come and have a meal with us," said Mr. Kanjoos shaking me warmly by the hand" (85), "Mr. Kanjoos ordered: "One beer for the Sahib, a small whisky for the Mem Sahib, a large one for me"' (87) and invitation in "'Come along and join us, what's your drink?"' (87) which shows the power and social status of the addresser towards the addressee and hence builds up the theme of the story.

Following conative function, we have phatic function of the text which presents the social and personal relations of the narrator as well as the characters along with the reader or the other characters of the short story. Here in the beginning of the short story, Mr. Kanjoos initiates the conversation in the bar by using the old saying of Lord Krishna, as the writer puts, "'SOMEONE asked Lord Krishna, 'what is the greatest miracle in the world?'... 'the greatest miracle is that although man knows his end is certain, he never entertains the thought

of death" (85). And it approves the carpe diem aspects of the post-modern era. Following the same pursuit, Mrs. Kanjoos too states that "'As my husband is always saying, you cannot take it with you. Eat, drink and be merry is our motto'" (85). Thus, the beginning of the short story confirms the very nature of the main characters of the short story. Next we find another phatic aspect as Mrs. Kanjoos asks the unnamed narrator "'Come along and join us, what's your drink?'" (87) which affirms the discourse of the text like high culture, drinking, gossiping, enjoying etc. The phatic function can also be witnessed when Mr. Kanjoos uses to enter the cocktail parties by asking everyone, "'Have you seen my wife anywhere?'" (90) and Mrs. Kanjoos as "'Have you seen my husband anywhere?'" (90-91) which hint at the personality traits of both Mr. and Mrs. Kanjoos as misers.

Poetic function of the text is achieved by using alliteration, parallelism, deviations and repetitions to add the imaginative power as well as the rhythmical qualities of the language to the text so that the reader's attention can be captured or focused on the imperative aspects of the short story. Here, in the current short story, we can find parallelism in the statements like "'Have you seen my wife anywhere?'" (90) and "'Have you seen my husband anywhere?'" (90-91). The repetition of the Lord Krishna's saying marks the beginning and the end of the short story and puts emphasis on the theme of the short story as Mr. Kanjoos says in the beginning "'what is the greatest miracle in the world?'" and in the end he states "'Arjuna once asked Lord Krishna what he thought was the greatest miracle in the world." Lord Krishna replied..'" (94). Along with this the compound noun "pot-luck" is repeated four times to emphasize the materialistic attitude of the Kanjoos family. Use of compound noun as "Budhu and Bhooki" (93) is a deviated one. As "budhu" a Hindi version means "stupid" is used for the bridegroom and "Bhookhi" an untranslated Hindi version of "hungry" or "miser" is used for the daughter of Mr. Kanjoos. Both are used ironically and humorously to mark their personality traits. In the same way, with the help of alliteration the incantatory quality is added to the text as in the pair of words "Miss and Master Kanjoos", "master and mistress" etc. The chief word "Kanjoos" used in variations such as "Mr. Kanjoos", "Mrs. Kanjoos", "Mama Kanjoos", "Papa Kanjoos", "the Kanjooses", "Master Kanjoos", "Bhooki Kanjoos", and "the little Kanjooses" is repeated sixty six times and thus dominates the text as well as the theme of the short story.

Metalingual function of a language which is directed towards the code itself can be found in the current short story as given in "It was later reported that every evening when the

children joined her, Mrs. Kanjoos recited a mantra in some ancient Indian language” where the recitation of the mantra itself focuses on the code and makes the language play with the language (91).

Apart from these six functions of a language, we have neologism, use of untranslated Hindi and hybrid words indicating appropriating English as a protest to claim cultural identity against the pressure of using colonial language which is the direct indicator of the hegemonic relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. Words like “firm-job-wallah”, “Srimati, Bhooki Kanjoos”, “MemSahib”, “Raj”, “chapatti”, “mantra”, “Lok and the Vidhan Sabbas”, “Diwali”, “Ganga”, “Papa” etc. as well as the references of British Raj, giving gifts to the bride during her marriage and the philosophy of Lord Krishna against the current Postcolonial and post modern conditions throw light on the cultural ideology of the upper middle class society and thus provide and guide the motive of the short story.

Thus “Mr. Kanjoos and the Great Miracle”, and “A Town Called Alice” show the direct implications of Roman Jakobson’s function of language on the text and provide a rich resource for illuminating the colonial and postcolonial issues in the post modern condition such as cultural clash, dislocation, identity crises, clash of past and present, Indianness, appropriation of English by the use of local Indian words, translated words, untranslated words and the use of hybrid words of Hindi and English to form Hinglish which further creates enough space for the better comprehension of the various dynamics of the texts.

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