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## **POETRY : ON LANGUAGE FORM AND PATTERN**

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Language is patterned on a more abstract level than phonology or graphology this level of abstraction is called 'form'. There are two components of the level 'form' grammar and lexis, each including different kinds of patterns. Patterns of grammar are more general and fewer in number than those of lexis. Grammar patterns include categories like word, clause, sentence, subject complement, noun, adverb and even sets of words like 'and', 'if', 'you' and so forth. Each of these categories and sets also has a meaning. The categories of grammar being very general, give us only a skeleton of a text. Grammar can inform us that someone is doing something to someone else, but it is the lexical items which tell us whom or what these general roles refer to. Lexis is a part of form having its own distinguishing patterns and relations.

Every language has its own grammar. Grammar gives rules for combining words to form sentences. It thus excludes, on the one hand, the phonological description of words and sentences, and, on the other, an account of the meaning that particular words and sentence bears. This, it may be observed, is also the sense in which the non-linguistic usually intends the word 'grammatical' to be understood when he says that such and such a combination of words or the form of a particular word is 'grammatical' or 'ungrammatical'. Literature makes extraordinary use of ordinary languages or we can also put it this way ----- literature makes extraordinary use of grammar. Imaginative writers find in grammatical patterns, a potential for producing literary effects of the most profound kind. P. Mahenke, was one of the first linguists to differentiate between 'grammatical' and 'ungrammatical'.

“Though every sentence is a string of words, not every string of words is a sentence, for a sentence may be either grammatical or ungrammatical. A sentence is ungrammatical if it

resembles, in a certain degree, a correctly constituted sentence any string of word is an acceptable sentence if a grammarian finds it possible to restore it to grammatical correctness the transformability of an ungrammatical sentence into one that is grammatically sound is a necessary condition of significance.

The question which now confronts us is this! How much of acceptability, or what kind of acceptability falls within the scope of the grammar, and how much is to accounted for by other parts of the linguistic description or by disciplines outside linguistics? It seems clear that utterances can be acceptable or unacceptable in various ways or in various degree. We might say of a foreigners' English, for example, that it is grammatically acceptable, but that his 'accent' is faulty. We might say of certain sentences (as Russel did, for instance, of the sentences Quadruplicity, drinks procrastination) that they are 'grammatical' but 'meaningless'; we might wish to say the same of the nonsense verse of Lewis Carroll, but for somewhat different reasons. Fairy-tales and science fiction provide many instances of sentences which would be unacceptable in 'everyday' English. Chomsky has used the terms 'grammatical' and "degree of grammaticalness". When a sentence is referred to as semi-grammatical, or as deviating from some grammatical regularity, there is no implication that its use is forbidden or being "censored". Given a grammatically deviant utterances, like "a grief ago", we interpret it by exploiting the features of grammatical structure. This cannot be done with a perfectly utterance. That is why a well-chosen deviant utterance may be richer and more effective. Chomsky explains in his theory how fully grammatical strings are understood. Understanding the structure of a grammatical sentence requires grasping the simple relation between that sentence and the set of grammatical sentences. By analogy, understanding a semi-sentence requires grasping the simplest relation between the sentence and the set of sentences. Another proposal for a theory of semi-sentences comes from Ziff. Ziff seeks to explain how semi-sentences are understood on analogy to the way Chomsky explains how fully grammatical strings are understood. The basic idea underlying Ziff's theory is that understanding a semi-sentence involves grasping the simplest relation between it and the set of sentences. What distinguishes semi-sentence from nonsense strings, strings that speakers cannot understand, is that the relation to the set of sentences is too complex in the case of the letter. Katz in 1964 differentiated between a semi-sentence (SS) and nonsense-strings (NS). "How far can a string depart from grammatically and still avoid being a nonsense string? We cannot say that a semi-sentence is a string that departs from grammatically to some degree but not to the point where no structure remains because some

nonsense strings exhibit a great deal of structure... Thus we shall say that a semi-sentence is a string that has not deviated from grammaticality so far that it no longer has sufficient structure to be understood. Strings in NS may exhibit structure, but they do not exhibit the right sort to be comprehensible to speakers”.

In literature, language being the medium, poets and artists make extraordinary use of it. The language of literature of poetry, in particular provides grounds for special interests to linguists. They look upon this language as deviation from the normal. Deviations are variable in degree. Poets like Cummings may provide almost extreme examples of deviation making their language almost indescribable in terms of grammar. Other poets may not go to that extent but they do so in lesser degree to meet their requirements. E.E. Cummings has written poetry in such a manner, that he has raised many problems for interpretation. Levin and Thorne have examined fragments from the poem, “anyone lived in a pretty how town” by E.E. Cummings, which raises problem of interpretation due to lack of sufficient structure. Levin asks, “can we fix the grammar so that it will generate observed yet intuitively ungrammatical sentences?” From his Thorne’s discussion it seems that grammar does not explicate ungrammatical strings. Thorne purposes a solution to this dilemma - the dilemma that a grammar cannot explain deviant strings and their interpretation. “Given a text, like Cummings’ poem, containing sequences which resist inclusion in a grammar of English it might prove more illuminating to regard it as a sample of a different language, or a different dialect, from standard English”. Such an approach works only if the deviation is rather extensively manifested, and its efficiency depends somewhat on the length of the text in question. The kind of ‘irregularity’ this poem exhibits “is regular in the context of the poem”. Interpreting the sentences of the poem is “like learning a language”. Thorne’s analogy is that the procedure of interpretation or syntax - detection is not initially bound by one’s own grammar. Therefore interpreting an ungrammatical string is rather a special operation.

This aspect of Thorne is quite misleading. Assuming that a given text of Cummings flouts the grammar of the language to a great extent, but on reading the poem, a sensitive reader claims that the reader shares with the poet a linguistic competence in Chomskyan terminology. The difference lies in the linguistic performance. Katz’s statement about ungrammaticalness. “The knowledge that enables a speaker to understand sentences – his knowledge of the rules of grammar - must be identically the knowledge that enables him to understand semi-sentences, for semi-sentences are understood in terms of their well formed parts. Moreover, the knowledge a speaker uses to recognise the respects in which a semi-

sentence is ungrammatical is also his knowledge of grammaticality knowledge of the grammatical rules is here employed to discover instances of their violation... The problem of accounting for this ability is one part of the central problem of understanding the relation between linguistic competence and performance.

Poets have taken liberties with language and this is of immense varieties and to different degrees. The problem is that of setting up of a reliable scale of grammaticality.”... No scale has been worked out though it is generally held that grammaticality is gradient”. Jan Aarts rightly observes that a poet should have a good reason for being ungrammatical, “his grammatical deviations should serve to highlight those points which are central in the meaning of the poem”. Grammatically, thus, is a cline having degree of deviation defined by reference to “the scales of institution delicacy”. In order to understand a deviant sequence and render it significant, therefore, the reader has to perceive some deeper connection with the text.

The language of poetry primarily through deviation has engaged the attention of linguists belonging to different schools but those concerned with generative linguistics have paid special attention to this problem and they have come out with interesting and sometimes illuminating studies of this problem. The line of argument taken up by Thorne has already been discussed in the preceding section.

In our view this approach suffers from initial and basic limitations. Undoubtedly the approach provides insightful observation about the nature of deviance. But there is a basic theoretical problem involved here. It is based on the premise that the language of poetry -- cummings’ poetry being a typical example, is marked by deviation and the deviant nature of language becomes the defining criterion for this kind of study. It is understandable in case of the poems ‘which have been studied from this point of view. But to define the language of literature as a whole on this dimension is to misinterpret it. It is true that there is deviation in poetry. Undoubtedly it play an important role in the context of poetry. But our objection lies in the fact that the language of literature or poetry for that matter cannot entirely be reduced on this dimension. All poetry does not have deviations to that degree and in some cases even if there is deviation it is virtually negligible or of little importance. In such cases the language of poetry cannot be looked upon as being defined by this criterion. At best this approach is lop-sided and at worst it is misleading.

Considering literature in it’s entirety and the language of property in its totality it is desirable to find an approach appropriate within the frame of linguistics and at the same time

doing full justice to the language of poetry. For this reason the language of poetry is accepted here as a cline variable degree. The scale is to be interpreted not on either or basis but on a more - or - less basis. At one of the scale we may consider those examples of poetry where deviation is so little that it hardly plays any crucial role. At the other end of the scale we have that kind of poetry where deviation becomes the basic fundamental, dimension. The cummings' is a case in point. Being an open ended scale there is a possibility also of accounting for any future possibility on the part of the poet more adventurous than cummings.

This view of the language of poetry has some advantages more than the one referred to in the preceding section. Firstly, it takes the language of poetry in its entirety and is not governed by individual cases. Secondly a study on these lines brings out the relative features of poets graded on this scale. Finally an intensive and comprehensive study along this dimension may also lead to the establishment of the features distinguishing the language of poetry from that of prose. As this work substantially applies Hallidayan model of linguistics the concept of "delicacy" may also prove useful in this connection.

A distinction is often made within grammar between morphology and syntax. Morphology may be defined as the study of the internal structure of words. Syntax may be defined as the study of the way in which words combine with one another to form phrases, clauses and sentences, "Syntax specifies the permissible combinations of grammatical words. Morphology describes the internal structure of each of these corresponding word... forms". The term morphology is derived from a greek word which means "form" or "shape". Morphology is the name given to the smallest unit in grammar. Morphology was introduced by linguists in the nineteenth century and refers to the study of form of words. Syntax refers to the structure of the sentence and morphology refers to the structure of the word within grammar, Halliday in his systemic linguistics" says that syntax is related to the study of grammar above the word and morphology is related to study of grammar below the word thereby extending the implications and applications of the terms 'morphology' and 'syntax'.

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