

Figures of Thought in the English Literary Discourse

Ayten Samir Seyidova

Correspondence: Ayten Samir Seyidova, Department of Foreign Languages, Azerbaijan University of Languages, Baku, Azerbaijan. E-mail: seyidliayten@hotmail.com

Received: September 19, 2012 Accepted: October 16, 2012 Online Published: November 29, 2012

doi:10.5539/ijel.v2n6p86

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v2n6p86>

Abstract

This article deals with the figures of thoughts in the English literary discourse. The figure of thought expresses the relation between the speech and its process. Its role and rhetoric position, their devices are thoroughly researched in this article and on giving examples from literatures the devices of rhetoric position are explained clearly.

Keywords: discourse, figure, structure, antithesis, rhetoric position, literary

1. Introduction

The paper aims to study the discursive strategies of the figures of thought. Among the rhetoric devices the figures of thought are particularly active in the process of speech. If it is possible to say, the figure of thought expresses the relation between the speech and its process. It is a kind of game played among the position of the speaker, various kinds of antitheses, questions and interjections, gradations, contrasts and pauses depending on the intention of speaker. In the literary discourse when the inter-character relations are realized by the figures of thought they play an important role in it, because the relations among the people are not mono-liner; the circle of their activity is very broad, depending on their level of intelligence, psychological state of minds they communicate with people of different background. The world created by the writer in the literary discourse is rich in personages; the relations among them remind the projection of the real life. Questions, pathos, concessions, mental meditations, break-in-the narration and other figures of thought are used along the plot as in the real life. Without them the language of the literary work is very unemotional, uninteresting and not impressive; sometimes a pause may add sense to the thought expressed in the sentence or a certain sense to the semantics of the whole text. Therefore the figures of thought attracted the attention of the antic Greek and Roman rhetoricians and they differed them from other figures. In the modern linguistics the theory of rhetoric structures of W.C. Mann, Ch. M.I.M. Matthiessen, S. A. Thomson attracts the attention of many scholars. (Mann W. C., Matthiessen Ch. M, Thomson S. A., 1992). Here the speech is about building a relation with a unit of discourse having a certain meaning. Such relations are called rhetoric and in the process of our research we shall try to focus attention on some of them (estimation, antithesis, concession) which play an important role in the formation of these relations.

2. Research Methodology

The method of contextual analysis has been used in this study. The strategies of the figures of thought have been thoroughly analyzed and they have been studied in different contexts.

3. Area Description

In discourse each figure has a certain rhetoric position because of its location. Depending on the common text hyper theme it begins to act, fulfils its role in building the thought and then returns to its previous position. When we say thought games, we mean the tactical move of various means of thought. For instance, gradation strengthens the meaning gradually and creates conditions for making the discourse more emotional and impressive. What attracts the attention here? Gradation repeats the known idea and strengthens it by adding figures to it. Thus, in the mentioned rhetoric process a neutral meaning and an intensifying factor take place simultaneously. The intensifying meaning is based on the neutral meaning. Meanwhile, we have to keep in mind that "...verbal messages constitute culturally embedded for us or signs that combine in a specific manner to communicate meanings." (Joy A. et al., 2009)

The figures of thought do not add new meaning to the neutral meaning, but a new shade to it able to influence its first meaning, more exactly, it joins the main meaning or give a new shape, new form to it. Such rhetoric devices

are called thought games. It is felt more conspicuously in antitheses. As we know, antithesis is built on antonyms, on the confrontation of notions in opposition. The contradicting meanings are opposed to each other: the opposition emerges on the basis of contrastive notions in the thought games. The rhetoric vigour of antithesis is in the creation of a new thought picture by opposing two adverse in thought games. The more effective is the use of this rhetoric figure, the more impressive is the literary discourse; to differentiate the characters the writer uses the thought games as a device.

As in the antithesis, the thought games are created with the participation of the main idea together with auxiliary ones along with the games. Thus, the main, active rhetoric operation is conducted on the ideas. Now we will focus on these devices:

4. Position of the Speaker

In the literary discourse the position of the speaker-author, character, as we noted above, emerges from the inter-character relations. In the process of the development of the plot the relations may soften or become strained and continue with a discord. The discourse being a text is built on this process. The above-mentioned parameters are also regarded to be quite natural in human relations. Here the position of the speaker emerges in two forms. 1) The position of the author: 2) the position of the character as an individual in the inter-character relations. The author takes part in both of them, but the difference is that in the first case the author takes part in it directly, in the second one – indirectly. The characters are the bearers of the ideas of the author. In novels and stories, as well as in poems, it is more active, but in drama the author is hidden behind the characters. Because of the above-mentioned feature is conspicuous in the literary discourse.

The position of the author may be grouped like the following:

4.1 Evaluation

By praising directly or indirectly the author creates high spirits in readers, as if calls them to be assured internally, and as a result assures them in it. In general, praise is possible mainly from two positions. One of them is inspiring, the other – estimating in nature. In all this cases approval and praise have the effect of awakening. The position of the author depends on the ideological direction of society. By appreciating the hero, by stressing his positive or negative qualities he shows his place and services in society, as a result he creates his picture for the reader. Fiction serves the society. The latter is divided to certain social groups and parties. In the literary discourse the author does not remain indifferent to these social groups, and naturally, by describing the characters, who are the bearers of the ideology in the society, it acquires a certain moral and educative role. Just at this moment the praise of some characters, approval of him by the writer and his criticism by others are the expression of the position of the author. For instance:

But on this night the old man, his beret pulled forward, was still sitting at the table with his map when the door opened and Kharkov, the Russian journalist came in with two other Russians in civilian clothes, leather coats and caps. The corporal of the guard closed the door reluctantly behind them. Kharkov had been the first responsible man he had been able to communicate with. “Comrade Marty”, said Kharkov in his politely disdainful hissing voice and smiled, showing his bad teeth.

Marty stood up. He did not like Kharkov, but Kharkov, coming from Pravda and in direct communication with Stalin, was at this moment one of the three most important men in Spain. (E. Hemingway, *For whom the Bell Tolls*, p.371)

4.2 Warning

Warning is one the forms of treatment, indicator of the true comprehension of the objective reality and moral support existing in human relations. Warning is informative in nature. The speaker uses it for conveying information, for warning to take precautions, and at the same time, for warning the listener to take into account certain things in his activity. In literary discourse this feature is used approximately in all the leading characters. Warning adds a new direction to the development of the plot, to the intensification of dramatism in fiction and has a special rhetoric impact in dialogues. In literary discourse the warning may be advising, threatening and recalling. For instance:

1) *Maria said, “Do not speak. It is better if we do not speak” (E. Hemingway. For Whom the Bell Tolls, p 334)*

2) *“Ignacio!” he said: “Put the gun on the shoulder of the boy”. “Thou”! To Joacin. “Sit there and do not move. Crouch over. More. No. More. (E. Hemingway, For Whom The Bell Tolls, p,283)*

3) *You could take the pistol out of the drawer and hold it. “Handle it freely”, was Grandfather’s expression. But you could not play with it because it was a serious weapon” (E. Hemingway, For Whom The Bell Tolls, p.297)*

Concession or consensus is a special form of agreement in social events, in inter-group and individual relations; here the speaker takes into account his own interests and gives place to some concessions; the inter-character tension weakens, the relations between the speaker and the listener soften, the road of development of the thought is cleared. This rhetoric figure is used in other types of discourse, too. For instance, in court trial discourses the lawyer of the accused agrees with a number of claims of his opponents in order to demonstrate his fair approach to the case, to prove his truthfulness, to strengthen his position.

In literary discourse both in the speech of the author and in those of the characters concession as a rhetoric figure is given an important place. In general, concession expects an adequate step, obliges the opposite party to an action. It has obliging, didactic and peace-making mission in the relations. For instance:

"Estoy Listo," Robert Jordan said. "I am ready to do it. Since you are all decided that it should be done it is a service that I can do". (E. Hemingway, For whom the Bell Tolls, p.197)

The attention is drawn to the concession of Englishman Robert Jordan by using the Spanish phrase "estoy listo" (I am ready) at the beginning of the text.

4.3 Confession

Confession is a notion which expresses mental, moral-aesthetic values. The speaker or the characters in the literary discourse are the bearers of these values. Confession is not a concession, but the admission of the reality due to some arguments or because of a rhetoric reason; as a general notion confession differs from concession. As a special device the rhetoric confession has a strong impact on the audience. It lessens the tension, shortens the distance between the listener and the speaker, creates conditions for the rapprochement among the socio-political groups, in the literary discourse it plays an important role as a rhetoric device which characterizes the common features of the personage and serves the goal of the author. Rhetoric confession as a device creates consensus, mutual understanding and softens the tension among the individuals. Let us pay attention to such an example:

"I am not religious", he said. But I will say ten our Fathers and ten Haven Marys that I should catch this fish, and I promise to make a pilgrimage to the virgin de Cobre if I catch him. That is a promise" (E. Hemingway. The old man and the sea, p. 50).

The hero comes to a consensus in his own self; the purpose here is to reach his goal, that is, to catch the fish.

In another example:

An hour after her arrival she received a very kind little letter from the Governors wife asking her to go and have tea with her. She went. She found Mrs Hanney alone, but in a minute the Governor joined them. He expressed his regret that she was leaving and told her how sorry he was for the cause.

It is very kind of you to say that, said Anne, smiling gaily, but you must not think I take it to heart. I am entirely on Alban's side. I think what he did was absolutely right and if you do not mind my saying so I think you have treated him most unjustly.

"Believe me; I hated having to take the step I took.

Don't let's talk about it" said Anne. (W. S. Maugham, Selected short stories, p. 280)

Here the chain of confessions serves to soften the tension among the individuals.

4.4 Antithesis

Antithesis has a particular place among the rhetoric figures. As far the Greek and Roman rhetoricians attached importance to antithesis and spoke of its rhetoric features sufficiently. In its contemporary meaning this term is used in linguistics, mathematics and algebra. If in linguistics it expresses opposing meanings and characters, in mathematics it is understood in the meaning of transformation of one of the units to an opposite sign. The Greek rhetoricians used the words opposite in meaning side by side and achieved high effect in the process of communication; therefore they illuminated some theoretical problems of antithesis, too.

Antithesis is a Greek word which means opposite in meaning. It is its dictionary meaning, but its rhetoric meaning is *opposite notions* or *opposing the characters* in order to achieve a special effect in speech. This term is used probably in very close meaning both in linguistics and philosophy. In stylistics it is appreciated as a stylistic figure. In linguistics antithesis is used in the sense of opposition, contradiction, standing on opposite poles and the bearer of opposite ideas (Krsina L., 1988); (Petrov O., 2007); (Vedenskaya L. Povlova L., 2006).

At the beginning we noted that antithesis has a special syntactic and semantic structure, two words with opposite meanings are used in succession.

For instance: the beggar son of the millionaire father. As we know, the words *beggar* and *millionaire* as the units of the dictionary are words opposite in meaning, express opposite notions.

Succession of opposing notions creates conditions for the birth of expressions of great impact. The expression ‘*the son of the millionaire*’ is a third type of the attributive word combination. The use of the second part with an attribute is due to the syntactic rules of the language; it is an ordinary case from grammatical point of view, as an expression with a special construction it emerges due the semantics of the words in opposite meanings in succession. Antithesis may emerge as a result of confrontation of one member of the construction with several members of that construction, the main point here is the confrontation of words with logical meaning in the mind (Granovskaya L., 2010).

Thus, when we speak of a special structure in antithesis, the semantic aspect of the construction prevails over its syntactic aspect, but it also depends on the structure of antithesis, too, the intensifying connectives (conjunctions) are also used for the intensification of opposition:

The iridescent bubbles were beautiful. But they were the falsest thing in the sea and the old man loved to see the big sea turtles eating them (E. Hemingway, The old man and the sea, p.30)

From structural point the antithesis may be formed with the help of conjunction **and**, too. For instance:

1) *One horseman was ahead and three rode behind (E/Hemingway, For whom the bell tolls, p. 249).*

2) *The ocean is very big and a skiff is small and hard to see, the old man said. (E. Hemingway, The old man and the sea, p.93)*

In the soliloquy of Hamlet **to be or not to be** by W. Shakespeare antithesis has a different structure. Such antitheses are usually connected with each other with the conjunction **or** in English. But this form may change depending on the situation and the conjunction may fall, which is the specific feature of such constructions. Let us pay attention to such an example:

Mr. Gruyter both disliked and respected him. He disliked him because he was narrow-minded and dogmatic. Himself a cheerful pagan who liked the good things of the flesh and was determined to get as many of them as his circumstances permitted he had no patience with a man the customs of the country suited its inhabitants and had no patience with the missionaries energetic efforts to destroy a way of life that for centuries had worked very well. He relied on him because he was honest, zealous, and good. Mr. Jones, an Australian of Welsh descent, was qualified doctor in the group and it was a comfort to know that if you fell ill you need not rely only on a Chinese practitioner; and none knew better than Controller how useful to all Mr. Jones's skill had been and with what charity he had given it. On the occasion of an epidemic of influenza the missionary had done the work of ten men and no storm short of a typhoon could prevent him from crossing to one island or another if this help was needed (W.S. Maugham, Collected short stories, p. 7.)

In this example **laughter** and **cry** express opposite notions, but from the point of view of wholeness the components of this antithesis are loosely connected with each other, because the words with opposite meanings are not opposed to each other, they are enumerated, because of this enumeration they are not able to form a strong semantic-structural autonomy. Thus, the method of opposition in antithesis as a device has an attributive feature.

Sometimes the antitheses having the structure of a sentence are built on repetitions. Thus, the antitheses in literary discourse are based on the following:

Opposition of notions is based on strong logical-psychological grounds because there is a logic in the opposition, too. That logic is characterized by a special ability in the frames of rhetoric.

- Antithesis may be formed on the basis of the confrontation of opposite meanings within the frames of one unit. Usually synonyms are used successively in order to characterize an object or subject, this succession increases the emotionality and pathos in the text. But to look at the same object in the frames of antonymic notions changes the angle of consideration and the sphere of its impact. Such antitheses are used in poetry more in comparison with prose. One of the components of antithesis serves the aim of stressing the other component which is in the focus of attention more than the previous one. In such cases one of the words with opposite meaning bears an auxiliary function.
- The rhetorical strategies of evaluation warning and antithesis are crafted through literary discourse to attract the reader's attention, to imitate cognitive poetic efforts and to perform diverse communicative function. They encourage an imaginative audience to actively process texts and realize a variety of associations involving feelings, attitudes, emotions and impressions along the textual lines.

- The use of opposite notions and characters in word combinations and sentences in contrastive form from logical point of view create conditions for the formation of a more compact and precise expression. This is one aspect of the issue, its second aspect is its aesthetic value, it makes the manner of expression more impressive, identifies the style of the author. The difference between the logical confrontation and rhetoric confrontation is that the latter serves the goal of making the speech more emotional, strengthens the relation between the speaker and listener.
- In literary discourse, we encounter with several types of antitheses from formal point of view:
 - An antithesis may consist of one, or several components (members), the main thing here is the semantic opposition.
 - Antitheses with complicated structures consist of chains of attributes; as a result, an ordinary event is actualized in an unordinary form.
 - Antithesis may be of synonymic nature, that is, one of its components may be simple from the point of view of its structure, the other one – its synonym and complicated in structure.

5. Conclusion

The figures of thought have a great role in the process of speech. They give a new shape to meaning of speech. The figures of thought make individual get across more abstract concepts and make the larger aesthetic impression of the communication improved.

References

- Evans, V. (2010). *Figurative language understanding in LCCM theory*. *Cognitive linguistics*, 21(4), 601-662. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/cogl.2010.020>
- Granovskaya, L. M. (2010). *Tropes and figures*. Baku: Mutarjim Press.
- Joy, A., Sherry, J. F., & Deschenes, J. (2009). Conceptual Blending in Advertising. *Journal of Business Research*, 62, 39-49. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2007.11.015>
- Krsina L. P. (1988). *Dictionary of foreign words*. Moscow: Russian language.
- Mann, W. C., Matthiessen, C. M. I. M., & Thompson, S. A. (1992). Rhetorical structure theory and text analysis. In W. C. Mann & S. A. Thompson (Eds.), *Discourse description: Diverse linguistic analyses of a fund-raising text*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Petrov, O. V. (2007). *Rhetorics*. Moscow: Prospect.
- Pilkington, A. (1992). Poetic effects. *Lingua*, 87, 29-51. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0024-3841\(92\)90024-D](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0024-3841(92)90024-D)
- Vedenskaya, L. A., & Pavlova, L. G. (2006). *Rhetorics for Lawyers*. Rostov-on-Don: Fenix.