

A Pedagogical Stylistic Study of “Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros

Kameran N. Abdullah

Department of English, Ministry of Education, Kurdistan Region, Iraq
Cihan University-Erbil
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Abstract—The current study intends to investigate the stylistic analysis of the short story “Eleven” written by Sandra Cisneros according to the categories of Leech and Short (1981). The stylistic analysis examines the structural and linguistic features of a literary texts that possess meaning and contributes to L2 learning, at the same time. Pedagogical practices regarding use of the stylistic approach in language classes can provide an opportunity for learners to enhance their language competency. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to discuss three categories of this approach, namely, lexical categories, grammatical categories, and figures of speech on “Eleven” throughout examples of pedagogical activities to present a way for teachers to apply these stylistic tools in EFL classes. Further studies are recommended to be carried out on various literary texts according to learners’ interests, needs, and levels to examine the extent to which using stylistic analysis can promote learning foreign language.

Keywords—Stylistic analysis, Lexical category, Grammatical category, Figures of speech, EFL.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, learning English as a foreign or second language has been considered as a learner-centered practices by applying different techniques to enhance learning in an independent, creative, and active environment. One of the tool that is implemented in different cultural and classroom contexts based on learner-centered philosophies is literature that can aid in language development. According to the Wang (2010), literature enhances the language proficiency of the learners as some texts may have been adapted from real-life conversations and situations. When teachers discuss a certain literary text, the learners share their insights and opinions in oral or written forms which provided them to practice the language communicatively. Therefore, one of the goals of literature aside from entertaining is to inform, persuade, and stimulate the mind. It is obvious that literary ideas are formed with language. The study of language in literature, or linguistics, is essential in literary criticism as it teaches learners to appreciate the literary text, its syntax, lexis, and phonology, to interpret the text. The analysis of these literary ideas using language, or linguistics, is part of what is known as stylistics (Gonzales and Flores, 2016).

According to Leech (1969), stylistics is the study of the use of language in literature. In stylistics, one may

focus on the syntactic, phonological, lexical, semantic, and graphological elements of style (Leech and Short, 1981). The goal of the stylistic approach is to “decode meaning and structural features of literary texts by identifying linguistic patterns in the text” (Fakeye and Temitayo, 2013, p. 51). A recent study by Fogal (2015) generally indicated the following: (1) Stylistics may be a tool for improving L2 performance, (2) stylistics contributes to language awareness, and (3) stylistics may be a tool for building academic skills beyond L2 acquisition. Devardhi and Nelson (2013), in their study, advocated the stylistic approach as a means to “develop language proficiency and highlight metalinguistic reflection” through “conscious attention to details and linguistic features” (p. 1).

It is worth noting that teachers should teach stylistic skills to provide students use stylistic tools and methods to learn and interpret literature in EFL class activities. Hassoon and Jafar (2018) in their study noted the importance of using stylistic analysis according to the study by Clark (2007) that pedagogical stylistics is a new trend that is concerned with teaching stylistics in the classroom. It is used to enhance the students’ awareness of the language used in their texts. The students are taught to analyze the text at three levels; the first level is concerned with analyzing the formal properties of the text which include analyzing phonology, vocabulary,

and the syntax of phrases and clauses and also analyzing the relationships between sentences, paragraphs. Second, stylistics goes beyond the formal features of the text. It concentrates on the text contact between a text, other texts, and the reader. Students are taught that meaning is not stable, it depends mainly on how the text is interpreted by the reader. In this sense, stylistics has an interactive function. Third, stylistics concerned itself with the sociocultural context within which reading and writing take place. Contextual factors such as the cultural background of the reader and the situation in which a text is read must be taken into consideration when analyzing a text (p. 60).

Therefore, to determine how and to what extent stylistic analysis of a literary text can be implemented pedagogically, in the current study, the stylistic analysis is devoted to examine the selected short story "Eleven" of Sandra Cisneros based on the aforementioned categories, namely, as lexical categories, grammatical categories, and figures of speech.

Sandra Cisneros is a poet, short story writer, novelist, essayist who was born in Chicago in 1954. Cisneros published *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* through Random House in 1991. The collection, in which "Eleven" first appeared, immediately received wide readership and strong critical support.

"Eleven" is a brief narrative that is nonetheless a powerful statement that is written in the first person, the story describes in the present tense the experience of a young Latina girl named Rachel in school on her 11th birthday and it deals with universal childhood frustration with adults.

II. STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF "ELEVEN"

A. Lexical Analysis

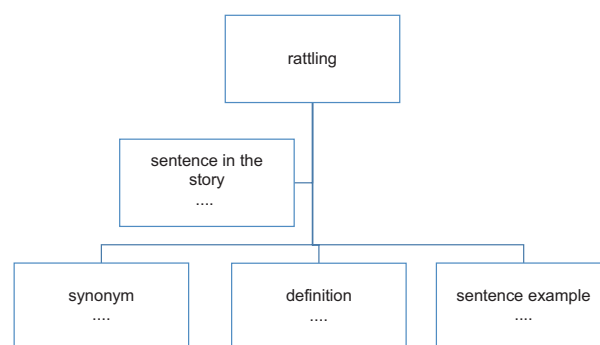
The first stage of processing a language is lexical analysis which refers to the association of meaning of the lexical terms obtained from texts. The author in the "Eleven" used various kinds of nouns, adjectives, and verbs to describe the different situations and circumstances in the story. In other words, by analyzing and interpreting the lexical terms, the feeling of narrator who is the main character of the study can be obtained. In a study by Çiftlikli (2019), general description of vocabulary choice as nouns, adjectives, and verbs was examined. In the following Table I, the classification of some vocabularies is clarified according to the sentences in the short story.

The following examples are intended to apply the lexical analysis of a literary text pedagogically in classroom activities regarding different levels of English competency.

1. **Brain storming**, as a pre-reading activity, can help student use different vocabularies or expressions based on their own experiences to predict the story.
2. **Creating a semantic map** can help students represent different types of word knowledge in graphic form as a post-reading activities.

TABLE 1: CLASSIFICATION OF SOME VOCABULARIES

Nouns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concrete nouns, to describe physical setting, appearance, things (writing in details to emphasize on negative feelings of Rachel) <i>"It's an ugly sweater with red plastic buttons and a collar and sleeves all stretched out ..."</i> <i>"I open my eyes, the red sweater's still sitting there like a big red mountain. I move the red sweater to the corner of my desk with my ruler."</i> • Abstract expressions (<i>being scared, sad, stupid...</i>) • Repetition of expressions, to emphasize the Rachel's struggle to hold back her younger age <i>"Not mine, not mine, not mine."</i>
Adjectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To describe the negative feelings about the red sweater, <i>Ugly, raggedy, old, sick, itchy, stupid, stretched</i> • To describe the negative feelings about herself and her age, <i>Stupid, scared, sad, quiet, invisible</i> • Repetition of expressions such as <i>the red sweater</i>, to show her negative feelings towards it.
Verbs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action verbs (<i>tell, wake up, open, sit, grow up, cry, put, come, etc.</i>) • State verbs (<i>understand, expect, need, have, know, belong, remember, pretend etc.</i>) <p>Sense verbs (<i>see, hear, smell, touch, ...</i>) use to show her negative feelings easily for hearing <i>"That's not mine, not mine, finally say in a little voice"</i>; for seeing <i>"red sweater"</i>, <i>"puts it right on my desk"</i>; for smelling <i>"...smells like cottage cheese"</i>; for touching <i>"I take it off right away and give it to her..."</i>.</p>



3. Use words which it best fits to fill the blanks in a paragraph as a post-reading activities.

... and then the other arm through the other and stand there with my arms apart like if the sweater hurts me and it does, all and full of germs that aren't even mine.

That's when everything I've been holding in since this morning, since when Mrs. Price put the sweater on my desk, finally let's go, and all of a sudden I'm crying in front of everybody. I wish I was but I'm not.

B. Grammatical and Graphological Analysis

The stylistic and syntactic choices made by the author provide inspiration and materials for teachers who seek to help students connect grammar and syntax to fine reading and writing. Thus, the importance and status of graphology (spelling and punctuation) as a linguistic level of analysis may affect meaning and produce esthetic effects. In the following Table II, some grammatical and graphological clues are explained based on Ostenson (2017) that can be implemented by students in while or post-reading activities.

C. Figures of Speech

A figure of speech is a word or phrase that brings a separate meaning from its literal definition to provide a dramatic effect. In "Eleven," the author use some kinds of figurative speech to express the narrator's intention, to elicit emotion, help readers form mental images, and draw readers into the story. Some figures of speech are elicited from the "Eleven" short story and presented in the following Table III. To learn the stylistic features of literary text, teachers could ask students to find figurative language as a while or post-reading activities.

III. FURTHER ANALYSIS OF LITERARY TEXT

To enhance reading and writing skills, making inference and using comprehension questions can help students to combine the text clues and uncover meaning.

A. Making Inference

Comprehension Questions

1. If you were Rachel, what would you have done when Mrs. Price said, "You put that sweater on right now"?

2. Which situations did you find the most embarrassing in the story?
3. What does the narrator tell about the characters?
4. How did you feel toward Rachel at the end of the story?

TABLE II: SOME GRAMMATICAL AND GRAPH LOGICAL CLUES

Sentence in the text	Stylistic or grammatical techniques
What they do not understand about birthdays and what they never tell you is that when you're eleven, you're also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one.	<i>The author uses commas to separate a list but includes "and" after each comma even though it's technically unnecessary. This adds special emphasis to each age individually.</i>
You do not feel eleven. Not right away. It takes a few days, weeks even, sometimes even months before you say Eleven when they ask you.	<i>Here is a phrase describing the sentence before, but with a period in between even though it's not an independent clause. It feels more abrupt than the previous sentences with coordinating clauses and appositive phrases. It shifts the tone back to centering more on conflict, that maybe it's not so great to not feel as old as you are.</i>
Or maybe some days you might need to sit on your mama's lap because you're scared, and that's the part of you that's five.	<i>Here is coordinating conjunction for two independent clauses. It softens the tone of conflict and shows that it's not inherently bad to have characteristics associated with being young</i>
And you do not feel smart eleven, not until you're almost twelve. That's the way it is.	<i>Here, "not until" acts as a coordinating conjunction for two independent clauses. It calls attention to the idea that although there are times when acting "younger" might be appropriate and even good, there are times when it doesn't feel good—times that you wish you were even older</i>

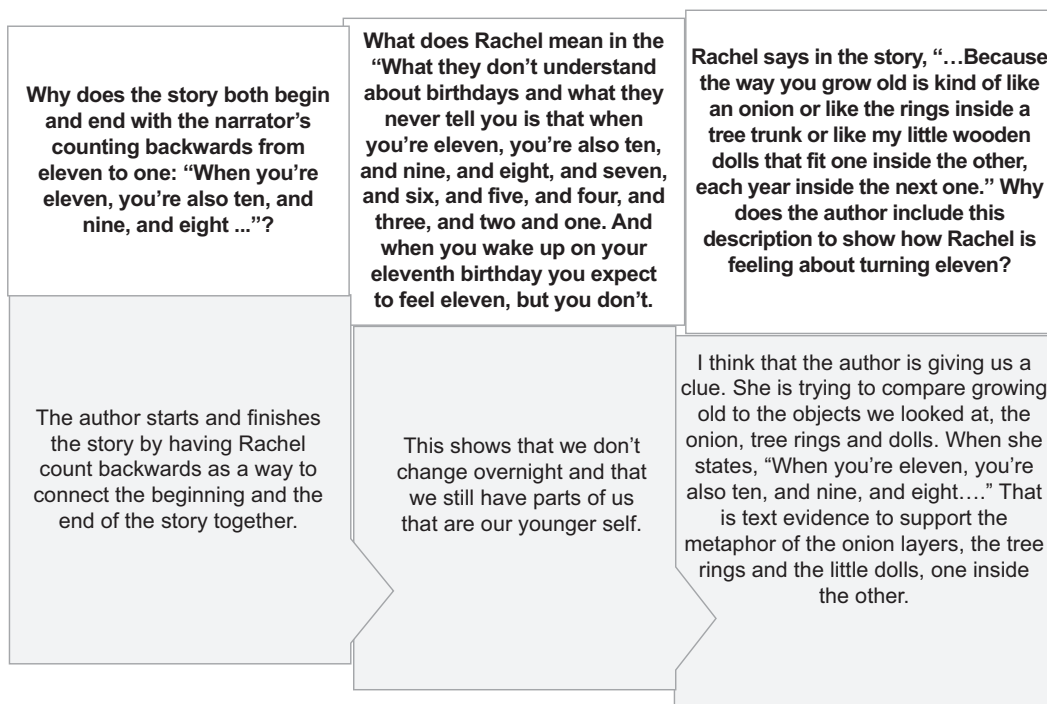


TABLE III: FIGURES OF SPEECH

Figures of speech	Sentence example in the text	Intention
Simile	"Because the way you grow old is kind of like an onion or like the rings inside a tree trunk or like my little wooden dolls that fit one inside the other; each year inside the next one."	When trying to explain how you can be 3, 10, and 11 years old at the same time
Imagery	"It's an ugly sweater with red plastic buttons and a collar and sleeves all stretched out like you could use it for a jump rope" Or "smells like cottage cheese,"	The narrator wants to convey the terrible sight and smell of the red sweater
Hyperbole	"It's maybe a 1000 years old ..."	To show the narrator's fear with being forced to wear an ugly old sweater.
Irony	"I'm eleven today. I'm eleven, ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one, but I wish I was one hundred and two. I wish I was anything but eleven,..."	On a day when she should be celebrated and when she keeps reminding herself of all the good things, she doesn't even want to be eleven. She wants to be just about any other age
Symbolize	"Mrs. Price put the red sweater on my desk. I would've known how to tell her it wasn't mine instead of just sitting there with that look on my face and nothing coming out of my mouth."	The sweater could be seen to symbolize the power other people have over Rachel.

V. CONCLUSION

The stylistic approach has indicated potential in both literature and language classes. Literature is considered a communicative discourse because it teaches learners how to communicate with others by expressing their opinions and ideas while guiding them to read, listen, and also how to appreciate the beauty of literature critically (Gonzales and Flores, 2016). According to the discussion, stylistic analyses, and pedagogical activities presented in the current study, it can be stated that in "Eleven" short story, the author created a literary context embodies linguistic codes and clues that conveying meaning. And at the same time, these esthetic clues provide insight for readers that encourage them to interpret the literary text that facilitates language learning.

Furthermore, an argumentative analysis of a piece of literature analyzing the idea, point of view, setting, plot (exposition, rising action, climax, and resolution), characters, tone, conflict, and theme which the writer uses to narrate the story can be considered as a post-reading activity that students could analyze the short story or other literary texts regarding the aforementioned elements.

Therefore, by introducing the stylistic approach in the classrooms, teachers help students understand and interpret literature which lead to enhance language proficiency.

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