

A Stylistic Study of Imam Ali's Sermon "Without Dots"

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Abstract

The present paper stylistically studies Imam Ali's sermon without dots in an attempt to stand on its aesthetic features and effect. It specifically tries to shed lights on those stylistics features that mainly related to those levels of linguistics like phonology, syntax, and semantics. Though it is a selective study the aesthetic features of Imam Ali speech cannot, if not possible, be described in a number of few lines.

1. Introduction

Language and style never move beyond a concentration on the supremacy of words. Style is effectively language manipulated in ways that signal it as different from 'ordinary' language. It is a consistent occurrence in the text of certain items and structures, or types of items and structures, among those offered by the language as a whole. A full stylistic analysis of a given

spoken or written text would describe the text at all the traditional levels of linguistic description – i.e. sound, form, structure and meaning. The immediate goal of stylistic analysis 'is to show why and how the text means what it does'. It provides a commentary which is objective and scientific based on a concrete quantifiable data and applied in a systematic way. It uses specialized technical terms and concepts which derive from the science of linguistics. (Bradford, 1997: 51). Actually, what the present study is mainly after is analyzing stylistically the speech of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib(henceforth Imam Ali) as a sample. One of his sermons, "sermon without dots" has been selected as data of analysis. The reason for selecting Imam Ali sermon lies in the fact that Imam Ali's speech and sermons are brimful of hints and signs that, by the unique style in

which they have been expressed, fill the readers with profound levels of insight. They represent one of the best and most credited samples of moral and spiritual instructions in the world of Islam, and for the entire humanity. Reza (2003: 12) reflects this meaning saying:

'His eloquence (Imam Ali) is such that he is the leader of the eloquent *and the chief of the rhetoricians... and from him the world has learnt the art of speech and rhetoric.*'

Although, one will not be able to catch a full grasp of the aesthetic features that has been used, the present paper tries to shed lights on only some phonological, syntactic, and semantic markers. It tries to come up with a better understanding of the delicate stylistic points and the unique eloquence with which the sermon priceless instructions have been expressed. It hypothesized here that Imam Ali's sermon uses a number of different linguistic features that contribute to the aesthetic as well as effective meaning of the sermon. The study has reached some conclusions confirm that these linguistic features trigger and play important roles in passing the intention of the speaker across.

2. The Linguistic and Stylistic Features of Oratory

Both Al-Bustany (1990:7) and Hyder (2009: 3) claim that sermons and speeches together are the primary prose form of the art of the spoken word that is known as oration or as the Arabs called it khutaba.

Its theme and style continue to influence the rhetoric of public addressee. Thus, oration can be seen as a branch of public speaking which appeals to the emotions and reasoning. An oration is a formally prepared and relatively elaborate discourse, wherein persuasion is the ultimate object and effect (Jay, 1971: 222). It is a special kind of public speaking. The orator speaks for a special purpose, in a special way, at a special time to a large public audience. Buehler and Johannesen (1965: 46) define oration as a memorized, official persuasive discourse which demonstrates the qualities of logic, organization, language and delivery; and produces an effect of eloquence which is far above the ordinary. Furthermore, oration may fall in one of four types: (i) Deliberative oratory or ' legislative', (2) Judicial oratory or 'forensic', (3) Epidictic oratory ('ceremonial' or ' demonstrative') and (4) Pulpit oratory (Shurter,1990:15-16).

As far as the style of oration is concerned, Al-Mussawi & Al-Husseini (2009: 29) show that the style of oration whether that of English or Arabic can be viewed by the use of all or some features as: the heavy use of brief, parallel sentences, and repeated phrases, as well as the utilization of rhyme—which yielded a strong rhythm in the oration and facilitated its comprehension. Repetitions of expressions add emphasis and create a refrain. The use of frequent direct address, and rhetorical questions—which engaged the audience in the speech act. Here, the orator addressed the audience in the second person plural often to encompass both sexes (Jones, 2005: 42). The orator also encourages the audience's involvement with numerous emphatic structures such as the use of cognate objects, the use of restrictive particles, the use of certain adverbs, particles of swear or reference to the future. Also, the use of metaphorical expressions and other figures of speech what may known as dignified language—which rendered the oration formal and made it understandable to its public audience (McManus, 1998: 61; Harris, 2005: 33 and Hyder, 2009: 3). These effects of language, which

give oration its aesthetic and persuasion effect, can simply be referred to as linguistic and stylistic features. The present study tries to shed lights on some of these features that are used in Imam Ali's "sermon without dots"; and be restricted to only three main levels:

1. Phonological level: standing only at "rhyme", "alliteration" and "paronomasia".
2. Syntactic level: standing only at "parallelism", "ellipsis", and "pronouns".
3. Semantic level: standing only at "simile", "metaphor", and "antithesis".

3. Data Analysis

3.1 The Phonological Features

The present study tries to shed lights on only the following phonological features:

1. Rhyme

A rhyme is a repetition of similar sounds in two or more words, most often in the final syllables of lines in poems. Johnsen (2011: 115) also defines rhyme as the repetition of accented vowel sounds and all sounds following them in words that are close together. It can be regarded, as Aziz (2012: 361) argues, a sort of

parallelism. She shows that parallelism can be notice where two separate sentences, or phrases, are equal in rhyme. It partly seems to be enjoyed simply as a repeating pattern that is pleasant to hear. It also serves as a powerful mnemonic device, facilitating memorization and clarifying the metrical structure for the listener (Johnsen, 2011:115-116). The sermon is rich with the use of rhyme, some examples are:

١. " الملك المحمود، المالك الودود، مصور كل مولود، و مال كل مطرود".

(Praise to Allah Who is the praiseworthy, the affectionate owner of everything, the One who forms everyone born, the ultimate end of everyone who is expelled.)¹

٢. " اطرخوا الحرام ودعوه، واسمعوا أمر الله وعوه".

(put what is prohibitive aside and abandon it, listen to the command of Allah and realize it.)

٣. "أودع الأولاد، وملك ما أراد".

(the most kind of all sons, and he had whatever he wanted.)

٤. " وله الحمد السرمد، والمدح لرسوله أحمد".

(Eternal praise belongs to Him; lauding belongs to His Messenger Ahmed.)

2. Alliteration
Alliteration is the repetition of the same sound or letter at the

beginning of each or most of the words in a sentence. It is a literary device that emphasizes on repetition of a particular consonant in the first syllables in a series of words. It heights the beauty of the sentence and enhance its style (Fabb, 2002: 350; Pardede, 2008: 31). For examples, the repetition of "م"(meem), "أ"(alif), "و" (waaw), and "ح" (ha'a)...etc.

٥. "مِال، مِوطد، مِرسِل، مِسهل، مِدرِكهَا، مِدمِر...الخ".

(the ultimate end, who firms, who sends. Who realizes, who destroys).

٦. "أحكام، أعلم، أحكم، أصل، أكد، أوعد...الخ".

(the judgments, he informs, he rules, the origin, emphasized, made honor).

3. Paronomasia

Paronomasia is a rhetorical device that suggests two or more meanings, by exploiting similar-sounding words, for an intended humorous effect or rhetorical effect. As a rhetorical device, it can function as an aesthetic and persuasive instrument for an author or speaker. It can be an effective communication tool in a variety of situations and forms. As far as the present study is concerned, paronomasia can come up in either a homophonic form-the use of words that sound the same and

have different meanings, which has no Arabic counterpart; or in a homographic form -the words that are spelt the same but have different meanings such as:

7. "سَوَاهٍ، سَوَاهٍ"

(besides Him, does).

In this regard, it is noticed that there is a difference between English and Arabic. Arabic has what is known as incomplete Jinaas which refers to lexical items that are orthographically dissimilar whether in form or arrangement of their letters. In English such a phenomenon has no relation to paronomasia, and known as metathesis- a term used in linguistics to refer to the transposition of elements in a word (e.g., pat, apt). For examples:

8. "مكور- مكرر ، لمع- ملع، أوعد - أودع، هلال- إهلال، دعوه - عوه...الخ".

(who fold it- repeats them, shines like lightning- who hurries pace towards his pursuit, warning about it- deposing in a crescent- the announcement, abandon it, realize it).

3.2 Syntactic Features

1. Parallelism

Aziz (2012: 367) explains that parallelism is the repetition of a structure. She showed that syntactic

parallelism occurs when the form of one sentence, clause or phrase repeats the form of the other. It involves structural identity between two sections of a text in three simultaneous senses: first, each section of the text contains the same classes of phrases and words. Second, corresponding phrases bear similar grammatical relations to the predicator. Third, the corresponding phrases and words are in the same order in both sections of the text. For examples:

9. "مصور كل مولود، ومال كل مطرود".

(the One who forms everyone born, the ultimate end of everyone who is expelled).

10. "اعملوا رعاكم الله أصلح الأعمال، واسلكوا مسالك الحلال".

(Do, may Allah look after you, righteous deeds, tread the paths of what is permissible.)

11. "إصلاح حاله والأعداد لماله".

(reforms your condition and prepares you for what you shall receive [in the Hereafter]).

2. Ellipsis

Alabi (2007: 163) cites that 'ellipsis entails the deliberate omission of a word or words, which are readily implied by the content'. It the omission of items in a sentence. The omitted item may have appeared before the omission or after it and may not be

recoverable at all from the sentence. The first category of ellipsis can be referred to as cataphoric ellipsis while the second is anaphoric. The third category can be described as zero-ellipsis and can be referred to as exophoric ellipsis, and one has to look beyond the sentence to recover the omitted item. It is used to create brevity reemphasis or ambiguity. For examples:

12. " الحمد---الله، --- ومأل، ولا صادق".
(Praise to Allah, the ultimate end, nor is there anyone to cause a defect).

13. أرمل---، أعلم ---وعلم---، أوعد---، ما أراد---"
(places them, He knows and He Informs, warning about it, He had whatever he wanted).

3. Personal Pronouns

Pronouns are usually be used frequently as a direct address to engaged the audience in the speech act. The audience is usually addressed in the second person, in the vocative form- in Arabic the masculine second person in the plural form is usually used, often to encompass both sexes. The frequent use of pronouns may help in persuading the audience and creating a kind of parallelism

(Jones, 2005: 42). The used pronouns in speech and sermons can be seen as:

1. Pronouns to address the audience

These pronouns are basically used to address audience as a group, but not necessarily to persuade them at this stage (ibid), e.g.:

13. " اعملوا رعاكم الله ، واصلوا الأرحام ، حرمكم....الخ"

(Do, may Allah look after you, keep in touch with your kinsfolk, your daughters)

2. Pronouns to include the audience

Here, speakers want the audience to be on their side and agree with their statements or ideas. This is usually get by the use of plural first person pronoun(ibid), e.g., "we"- "sermon without Dots" is empty from such pronouns.

3. Pronouns to exclude the audience or to distance the audience

Here, speakers may use first person pronoun to refer to himself, or third person pronoun to refer to other(s)(ibid). For example:

14. " عم سماحه، احمده، مهدي رحمة، اسأل....الخ"

(his forgiveness, I praise him, he[Muhammad] paved, blessing his, I plead).

It should be noted that Arabic language is full with implicit

pronouns which have no English counterpart.

3.3 Semantic Features

1. Simile

McManus (1998: 62) explains simile as a comparison made between two objects of different kinds which have, however, at least one point in common. It is often used in a phrase introduced by the use of the words "like" or "as". It adds meaning by calling to attention the process of comparison. Thus, simile, as a linguistic and aesthetic skill, varies from one text-producer to another in quality, effectiveness, and most importantly, the impact upon the text-receiver. For example: 15. "وأوحده كما وحده الأواه، وما مهر لها كما مهر رسول الله أم سلمه".

(I recognize His unity just as those who love Him most recognize, let her[bride] dower be just as the Messenger of Allah had paid her).

1. Metaphor

A metaphor is an implied simile and a comparison, between two dissimilar and unrelated things or persons. It is also a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one object or idea is applied to another, thereby suggesting a likeness or analogy between them. It is just like simile has a strong persuasive effect and

aesthetic value (McManus, 1998: 61). For example:

16. "ساطع المهاد، محمداً علماً".

(the one who spread out of the earth, Muhammad as a banner).

3. Antithesis

A striking opposition or contrast of words is made in the same sentence. It is a figure of speech which establishes a clear, contrasting relationship between two ideas by joining them together or juxtaposing them, often in parallel structure. Human beings are categorizers, so the mind has a natural love for antithesis, which creates a definite and systematic relationship between ideas. Furthermore, antitheses are used to strengthen an argument by using either exact opposites or simply contrasting ideas, but can also include both. They typically make a sentence more memorable for the reader or listener through balance and emphasis of the words (Harris, 2005: 283). For example:

17. "مورد-مصدر، حلال- حرام، صاهروا- صارمو".

(the one who forms everyone- the ultimate end, tread the paths of what is permissible- put what is prohibitive aside, give your daughter by way of marriage-stay away from the folk).

4. Conclusions

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The appropriate and careful choice of words has a striking impression on the recipients and stir up their emotions. It is only through this the intended meaning of the speaker can be conveyed effectively. Thus, expressing effectively the thoughts, feelings and passing across the intended message of the speaker can only be reached by employing a number of different linguistic and stylistic features, whether that of phonological, syntactic or semantic features...etc. The use of such features have not only aesthetic value but also a persuasive strong effect. Imam Ali's " sermon without dots" has employed different linguistic

features and aesthetic devices that suit its purpose of persuading and swaying an audience's opinions. Stylistics, by this analysis has also shown that there is a distinction between the language of 'formal speeches and sermons' and 'ordinary' language. The former is rich with such linguistic features that may not be fully grasp. Then, the conclusions comes to verify what is hypothesized in this study.

Notes

1. The researcher adopts the translation of Yasin T. Al-Jibouri (2012) as shown in Online.
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