

The Study of Phonetic Stylistics in the Sermons of Nahj al-Balagha

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Stylistics is a realm of literature that is used as a means to evaluate the value of literary works. The knowledge of stylistics provides a ground upon which the effect of a work of its readers can be assessed with reference to linguistic features and the literary prowess and expertise of the author. The unique stylistic features serve as a factor that distinguishes a work of literature from others. In other words, such stylistic features can be seen as the identity of a text that sets it apart from similar works of literature.

2. Theoretical Framework

One of the important issues that is considered in stylistic analysis of a literary work is the analysis of phonetic features of the text language or its phonetic style. Phonetic stylistics deals with the value and application of sounds and their aesthetic effect and role in the speech style. It yields clear and concrete results with regard to the analysis of music in the poetry or prose as well as the literary style of the author (Fotouhi, 2012).

Sermons of the Nahj al-Balaghe exemplify a religious text that is worthy of analysis in terms of phonetic stylistics, for one of its striking stylistic features is lexical and musical arrangement of words or musical elements. This paper is an attempt to study the phonetic style of sermons of Nahj al-Balaghe, hoping to make artist and literature readers more familiar with the phonetic style of Amir al-Momenin and thereby shed further light on its aesthetics and values to offer a new insights about these sermons.

3. Method

In this paper, a descriptive analytical method based on a reference to sermons of Nahj al-Balaghe (the version translated by Dashti) has been adopted.

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4. Results and Discussion

One factor that marks the distinction between different styles is the phonetic or musical level that contributes to the beauty and impact of a text.

The analysis of phonetic style of texts helps appreciate their nature and discover their beauty. Moreover, it contributes to exploring emotional and spiritual reactions intended by the author by using specific sounds and music, because it is obvious that sound is a manifestation of inner feelings, and passivity naturally leads to the diversity of sound and voice (Al-Rafei, 1997). In other words, the inner emotions of the author have enabled him to exploit particular sounds and words to create a musical effect that magnifies the impact of the work on its readers (Salih, 2003).

Through an analysis of a work of literature at phonetic level, one can evaluate the performance of the writer or creator of the work, as sounds offer huge expressive potentials; therefore, sounds, songs, their extent and intensity, continuity and repetition, and intervals of silent letters possess immense capacities in terms of expression (Fazl, 1998).

Among phonetic elements that play a pivotal role at this linguistic level and contribute to the emergence of outstanding style of speech are external music, which is judged from the meter and rhyme in poetry, and internal music, which is assessed based on the application of literary devices such as Saj (parallel, balanced, etc.), puns (incomplete, derivative, etc.), and repetition and internal music, which are evaluated by means of conflict and contrast in the text (Shamisa, 1995).

In the study of phonetic stylistics of sermons of Nahj al-Balaghe, we deal with features that are conspicuously manifested in sermons, bestow prominence to the words of Imam and give it a particular form that is distinctive from normal speech and standard language. These features include: rhyme, pun, inner rhyme and music, repetition, contradiction and contrast.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of the phonetic stylistics of sermons of Nahj al-Balaghe suggests that rhyme, pun, inner music (phonotactics), repetition (letters and words), conflict and contrast are prominent phonetic manifestations in the sermons of Nahj al-Balaghe. Meanwhile, Saj and puns have relatively higher frequency than other elements. The music arising from any of these phonetic elements not only adds to the melody and capturing of the minds and thoughts of the audience, but also allows inference of meanings and implicit concepts of the sermons. In other words, Imam Ali (AS) utilizes the music of words in a way that each of these words serve as a symphony and orchestra that touches the strings of heart and inspire a wave of exhilaration, delight or apprehension in the hearts and takes away their fatigue. Besides, it contributes to the evocation of meanings intended by Imam Ali (AS). This play of the music and intended concepts have bestowed striking harmony to the sermons and reinforced the internal coherence of the text.

Keywords: Phonetic stylistics, Nahj al-Balagha, Sermons, Polyphonic elements.

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