Bridging Literature and Linguistics

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Abstract: Two majors linguistics and literature in the schools of letters both in the state and private universities throughout Indonesia are commonly separated sharply. Courses of literature in the Department of Linguistics are offered minimally, such that the students of linguistics are not given a conducive atmosphere to express their literary appreciation. Likewise, courses of linguistics in the Department of Literature are very restricted, so that the students of literature are unable to analyze literary works from the points of linguistic view. This paper tries to bridge linguistics and literature. The attempt to bridge linguistics and literature is based on three postulates: (1) literature consists of linguistic objects designed with an artistic end, (2) linguistic objects are formal objects, and (3) a formal account of linguistic object designed with an artistic end approximates a formal account of that artistic design. Two major directions in the approaches and emphases will be presented in the paper exogenous and endogenous. Exogenous approach tries to search for adequate description of (1) poetic language as contrasted with ordinary language, (2) language of a particular author contrasted with that of other authors, and (3) a particular literary work contrasted with other works of the same author. This part touches upon three areas of exogenous approach isolation, description, and characterization. Endogenous, on the hand, is based upon an assumption that a writer exhibits, probably without realizing it, certain systematic preferences for particular aspects of linguistic patterns. Planning a bridge between linguistics and literature is by no means without problems. Therefore, this paper also presents some possible solutions.

Key words: endogenous, exogenous, literature and linguistics

Interest in linguistic approaches to literature has grown rapidly in the western world since 1960s. However, the growth spread very slowly in Indonesia. The slow development of linguistic approach to literature is signified by the proportion of linguistic courses in the department of literature, and courses of literature in the department of linguistics.

In the curriculum of the English Language and Literature (ELL) Program of the State University of Malang, for example, the number of credits for linguistic and literary courses, respectively, does not exceed more than 12 credits, or 7.80 % of the total number of 154 credits. The credits-load of the two fields is less than that of the so called "general courses" which, I think, are unnecessary for the students of the two departments. The courses in linguistics offered to the students cover only superficial concepts of introduction to linguistics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and sociolinguistics, with two credits for each. Likewise, courses in literature consist of introduction to literature, prose fiction, poetry, drama, cross-cultural understanding, and the history of the English language, also with only two credits for each. This fact, half-hearted process of teaching-learning linguistics and literature, will not produce outputs with adequate knowledge, skills, and creativity in linguistics and/or literature. Somehow, a bridge between the two disciplines must be built.

Linguistic approach to literature is based on at least three postulates: (1) literature consists of linguistic objects designed with an artistic end, (2) linguistic objects are formal objects, and (3) a formal object, account of linguistic object designed with an artistic end approximates a formal account of that artistic design. These three postulates apply to the four basic aspects of linguistics phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

There are two major directions in the linguistic approach to literature exogenous and endogenous. The exogenous approach is the search for adequate description of poetic language as contrasted with ordinary language, of the language of a particular author as contrasted with that of other authors, or of a particular work with other works of the same author. Endogenous approach, on the other hand, is the search for explanatory formal structures in poetic language in each individual work, or in the work of a particular author.

Three main concerns are to be found in exogenous approach: (1) isolation, by means of contrastive analysis, of the language of literature as compared with the language of everyday life, (2) the description of the language of one author by comparison with others, and (3) characterization of particular "violation" in poetic language of the rules of ordinary language.

The search for adequate description of poetic language as contrasted with ordinary language will be presented as follows.

1. **The Lamb**

   (William Blake 1757 – 1827)
   Little Lamb, who made thee?
   Dost thou know who made thee?
   Gave thee life, and bid thee feed,
   By the stream and o'er the mean;
   Gave thee clothing of delight,
   Softest clothing, wooly, bright;
   Gave thee such a tender voice,
   Making all the vales rejoice?
   Little Lamb, who made thee?
   Dost thou know who made thee?

   Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
   Little Lamb, I'll tell thee:
   He is called by thy name,
   For He calls Himself a Lamb.
   He is meek, and He is mild;
   He became a little child.
   I a child and thou a lamb,
   We are called by His name.
   Little Lamb, God Bless thee!
   Little Lamb, God Bless thee!

Licencia Poetica enables the poet to change the rules of ordinary language as the poet's wish. In the case of poem (1), we can present at least two linguistics perspectives to understand: deixis (the relation of reference to the point of origin of the utterance) and speech acts (doing things with words.) From deictic point of view, William Blake seems to

violate the deictic rules of the language of ordinary life. The deictic rules which are changed involve deixes of the addressee, of place and of time. In the language of ordinary life, the *lamb*, a young sheep, is animate but not human (using Haley's (1980) semantic fields of human perceptions). However, the poet raises the status of animate to human and addressing the lamb by using lexicons that can collocate human, such as *thee, clothing, voice, rejoice, know, thy, and thou*. The deictic rules of space are also violated by the poet. He means lamb in general, but in his poem, he seems to speak to a particular lamb that is standing in front of him. The change of space deixis by the poet can be seen from the use of the following expressions.

> Little Lamb, who made thee?
> Dost thou know who made thee?
> ....
> Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
> Little Lamb, I'll tell thee:

In addition to the deixes of addressee and of space, the deixis of time is also changed by the poet. That lambs have the features the way they do as described by the poet is, as a matter of fact, time free. In this poem, however, the utterances of the poet seem to happen here and now. Thus, time sensitive.

William Blake's poem, *Lamb*, is his admiration towards God, The Only Creator. This inference can be reached through speech act analysis. When a poet writes a poem he is actually doing things *persuading, refusing, inviting, criticizing, admiring*, and so forth. In poem (1) Blake does not mean to express his literal meaning but indirectly intends to admire God, using lamb as his object. Referring to Austin's theory of speech acts, the poet is not only producing locution, but also doing illocution and perlocution. His locution is the poem itself with its literal meaning of the symbol he employs. His illocution is the force behind the poem, and his perlocution is the effect which the poem might touch the reader's feeling to admire all God's creatures. This is the isolation in the exogenous approach, by means of contrastive analysis of the language of literature (as one of the uses of language) as compared with the language of everyday life.

The second concern in the approach is the description of the language of one author or period by comparing with others. Consider the following poem!

2. The Oven Bird

    (Robert Frost 1875 – 1963)
    There is a singer everyone has found
    Loud, a mid-summer and a mid-wood bird,
    Who makes the solid tree trunks sound again.
    He says that leaves are old and that for flowers
    Mid-summer is to spring as one of ten.

    He says the early petal-fall is past
    When pear and cherry bloom went down in showers
    On sunny days a moment overcast;
    And comes that other fall we name the fall.

    He says the highway dust is over all.
    The bird would cease and be as other birds
    But he knows in singing not to sing.
    The question that he frames in all but words
    Is what to make of a diminished thing.

In general, the difference between Blake's language and Frost's is found in the type of speech. Blake uses *direct speech* as if he were speaking to the hearer directly in front of him. He addresses the hearer by using the second person singular such as *thee, thou, and thy*. Meanwhile, Frost uses *indirect speech*, reporting what he observes about the *oven bird*, beginning the poem with a report expression such as *There is ...* Therefore, he addresses the object with the third person singular *he*.

In particular, the differences in language use between Blake and Frost are reflected in the diction and the sentence structures. Difference in periods of life, 1757 – 1827 for Blake and 1875 – 1963 for Frost, motivate them to use different forms of pronouns. Blake uses old forms of pronoun such *thou, thee*, and *thy*, while Frost does not. In addition, in terms of type of discourse, Blake's poem *The Lamb* is expressed in a dialogue, as a part of narrative writing. Frost's *The Oven Bird*, on the other hand, is descriptive in nature. As a consequence, he chooses words that may make

the reader see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. Since descriptions are to provide the reader with objective sensory details about objects, places, and people that actually exist, they will necessarily include concrete and specific words that create images for the reader. Frost's diction that creates images are represented in the use of the following expressions:

> Who makes the solid tree trunk sound again
> … that leaves are old …
> … the early petal-fall …
> When pear and cherry bloom went down in showers
> … the highway dust is over all.

The sentence structures between the two poets are also different. Blake likes using simple declarative and interrogative sentences, while Frost likes using cumulative sentences. A cumulative sentence is a sentence in which the main idea is stated first, with modifying words or groups of words [between square brackets] added after the main idea to give details about it as found in the following expression.

> There is a singer [everyone has heard,
> Loud, a mid-summer and a mid-wood bird,
> [who makes the solid tree trunks sound again.]

The added details between [ ] describe the main idea and the only way to include descriptive details in the sentences is to use modifiers. Frost seems to use them constantly in his poems.

The last concern in exogenous approach is characterizing particular "violation" in poetic language of the rules of ordinary language. The violation of the rules of ordinary language, adopting generative transformational grammar, does not take place in the phrase structure rules, but rather in the transformational rules, especially those that deal with concord between subject and object and between pronoun and its anaphoric relationship. Considering poem (1) and poem (2), we see "violations" of concord in anaphoric relationship and subject-predicate relationship. In *The Lamb*, we find anaphora such as;

> Little Lamb, who made thee?
> Dost thou know who made thee?
> Gave thee life, and bid thee feed,

The features of the subject *lamb* should be [-HUMAN]. Consequently, the pronoun used to represent it must also be [-HUMAN]. But the anaphora used here is the pronoun *thee*, which is [+HUMAN]. This is an evidence that the poet violates the rule of the language of ordinary life. Like wise, in *The Oven Bird*, the rule of concord between subject and predicate is violated. The subject, *the bird* [-HUMAN], is addressed in pronoun *he*, the feature of which is [+HUMAN]. The violation then is continued by predicating the bird, which is [-HUMAN], with [+HUMAN] verb *says*. There are a few examples of violation of the rules of the language of ordinary life made by the poet.

Endogenous approach searches for explanatory formal structures in poetic language (the term *poetic* used to include all literature), in each individual work, or in the work of a particular author. This approach concerns itself with four areas general theory, prose style, metric, and poetic syntax. For the purpose of introducing linguistic perspectives on literature, I will present the last one, poetic syntax. By the term syntax, I define it as principles, processes, and procedures of constructing phrases, clauses, and sentences. Again, I take phrases, clauses, and sentences from poems for discussion. The syntactic approach I use here is *Generative Transformational Grammar*. Notice the following poem!
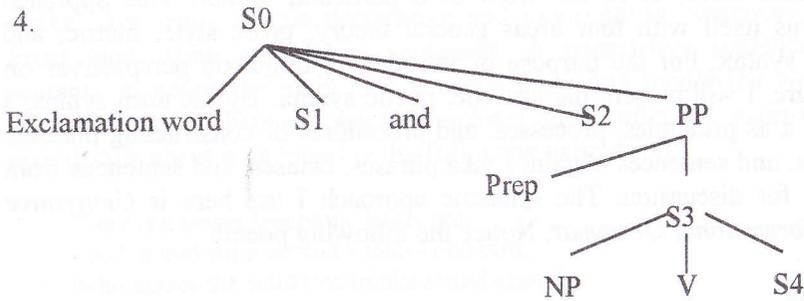
3. **Song**

> (William Blake 1757 – 1827)
> How sweet I roam'd from field to field
> And tasted all the summer's pride,
> 'Til I the prince of love beheld
> Who in the sunny beams did glide!
>
> He shew'd me lilies for my hair,
> And blushing roses for my brow;
> He led me through his gardens fair,
> Where all his golden pleasures grow.
>
> With sweet May dews my wings were wet,
> And Phaebus fir'd my vocal rage;
> He caught me in his silken net,
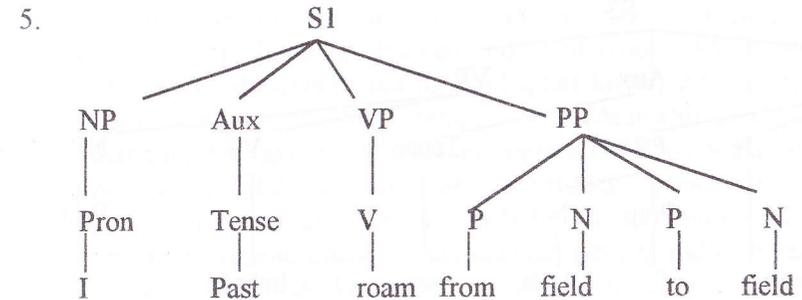> And shut me in his golden cage.

He loves to sit and her me sing,
Then, laughing, sports and plays with me;
The stretches out my golden wing,
And mocks my loss of liberty.

Stanza 1 contains a compound complex sentence with a complex adverbial clause of time. The sentence can be rephrased into How sweet I roamed from field to field and tasted all the summer's pride, till the prince of love beheld me (I) who did glide in the sunny beams. If this rephrase is right, application of the phrase structure rules for the sentence would be, more or less, as follows.
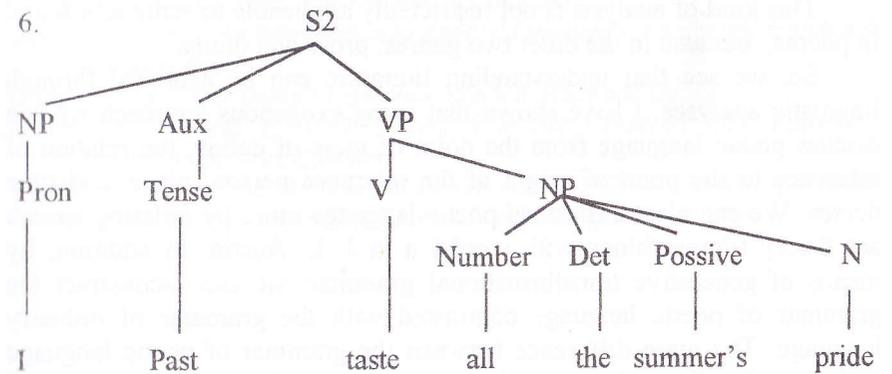
4.

S0
├─ Exclamation word
├─ S1
├─ and
└─ S2   PP
         ├─ Prep
         └─ S3
              ├─ NP
              ├─ V
              └─ S4

Notes:
S0 is the whole compound complex sentence in stanza 1.
S1 is *I roamed from field to field*
S2 is *I tasted all the summer's pride*
S3 is *The prince of love beheld me (I)*
S4 is *I did glide in the sunny beams*
Exclamation words are *How sweet*
The conjunction is *and*.

PP is *a prepositional phrase*
Prep is *a preposition*
NP is *a noun phrase*
V is *a verb*

S1 , then, can be analyzed into the following tree diagram.

5.

S1
├─ NP ── Pron ── I
├─ Aux ── Tense ── Past
├─ VP ── V ── roam
└─ PP
     ├─ P ── from
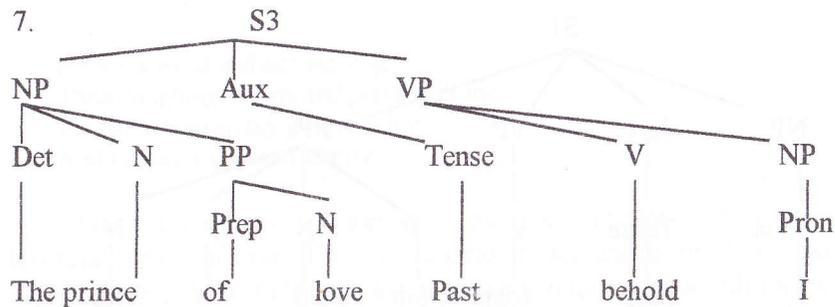   ├─ N ── field
     ├─ P ── to
     └─ N ── field

Notes:
Pron is a pronoun
N is a noun

The transformational rules involved in the sentence is affix-hopping: *past + roam => roam + past => roamed*. The surface structure is *I roamed from field to field*. Further, S2 can be described in the same way.

6.

S2
├─ NP ── Pron ── I
├─ Aux ── Tense ── Past
└─ VP
     ├─ V ── taste
     └─ NP
          ├─ Number ── all
          ├─ Det ── the
          ├─ Possive ── summer's
          └─ N ── pride

The only transformational rule involved in the sentence is the affix-hopping *past + taste* to result in *tasted*. Applying the processes, we can analyze S3.

7.
```
                          S3
        ┌──────────────┬──────────────┐
       NP             Aux            VP
   ┌────┼────┐         │        ┌─────┼──────┐
  Det   N   PP       Tense      V           NP
   │    │    ┌──┬──┐   │         │           │
   │    │  Prep   N    │         │          Pron
   │    │    │    │     │         │           │
The prince  of  love  Past     behold        I
```

Note:
Det is *the determiner*

The transformational rules involved in the sentence are *affix-hopping* and the permutation of the pronoun *I* to occupy the first position after the preposition *'Til* of S0. Meanwhile, the transformational rules found in sentence S4 (the tree diagram of its deep structure is not presented here) are the substitution of *who* for *I* and permutation of *did glide*, after *do-insertion*. The same processes also apply to the next stanzas.

This kind of analysis is not restrictedly applicable to sentences found in poems, but also in the other two genres: prose and drama.

So, we see that understanding literature can be achieved through linguistic analyses. I have shown that using exogenous approach we can discuss poetic language from the point of view of deixis, the relation of reference to the point of origin of the utterance person, place, and time deixes. We can also understand poetic language more by utilizing speech act theory (doing things with words) a la J. L. Austin. In addition, by means of generative transformational grammar, we can reconstruct the grammar of poetic language contrasted with the grammar of ordinary language. The main difference between the grammar of poetic language and that of ordinary language is the violation of subject-predicate and anaphoric or cataphoric concords, where the poet does not obey rules of selectional restrictions.

The problem now is 'How can we encourage the students of literature to utilize linguistics in order to understand and appreciate more literary works and how can we motivate the students of linguistics to apply linguistics principles in analyzing and enjoying literary works?' The

students of literature are able to analyze literary works through linguistics if they have strong linguistic background. Collecting 7.8% of the total credits of 154, the students do not have adequate knowledge of linguistics through which they can analyze literary works. Meanwhile, they have to waste their time for taking less relevant courses (17.1% compared to 7.8 %) such as "pendidikan kewiraan, pendidikan pancasila, strategi kebudayaan, ilmu alamiah dasar, bahasa Indonesia keilmuan, ilmu sosial dasar, pengantar kependidikan, perkembangan peserta didik, belajar dan pembelajaran, and profesi keguruan", of which the course contents are often vague. I think the students will get more knowledge in linguistics and literature if we have the courage to change the curriculum that half-heartedly processes the students to be qualified scholars in their fields by removing the unnecessary courses for linguistics and literature.

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