2. THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF POETRY AT POSTGRADUATE LEVEL: A COGNITIVE STYLISTICS APPROACH

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Abstract

The major purpose of this research was to enhance the methods for the teaching and learning of poetry at Adama Science and Technology University (Ethiopia) through a cognitive stylistics practice. The study was pursued with the conviction that the poetry writing skills of postgraduate learners can be enhanced through a cognitive stylistics method.

The research was conducted on the basis of an experimental research design which was started in 2013 and ended in 2014. A total of 20 postgraduate students participated in the study. These students were again classified into an experimental group (10) and control group (10) randomly. The students in the experimental group took the course through a cognitive stylistics method. Areas in the cognitive stylistics unit included: verbal irony, cognitive metaphor, image–schema, figure and ground, implicature, contextual effects, relevance and aboriginal poetry. Active learning methods (ALM) were also integrated into the cognitive stylistics framework so that the students could vigorously dominate the learning and teaching of poetry. However, the students in the comparison group took the same course with a traditional teaching method. Prepared notes and lectures on themes, techniques, figures of speech and literary elements were given. The teacher-cum-researcher often dominated the teaching and learning process. Each group was given similar pre- and post-tests, designed specifically for this research purpose. Before the classroom experiment was carried out, a pilot study was conducted in 2013 with a different group of postgraduate students. The selection of the poems and the revision of the tests were finalized after the pilot study was completed.

After the completion of the course, both sample groups took a test out of 20. As the mean pretest score showed, both the control and experimental groups performed differently in their creative writing pretest. The experimental mean score which was 9.88 was a little higher than the control mean score of 9.31. But, the t-test result for the pre-test showed that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of both the experimental and control groups. However, the t-value of the cognitive stylistics post-test was 15.168 and 9.726. The table value of t-critical was 2.10 with 18 degree of freedom and at a significance level of 0.05. Because the t-value of 15.168 was much greater than the t-critical value of 2.10 for two tailed test, at 0.05 level of significance for 18 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, the cognitive stylistics method enhances poetry teaching and learning in a tertiary context in Ethiopia. It was then recommended that poetry teachers can integrate the cognitive stylistics method while teaching poetry at postgraduate level.

Key Words: Poetry writing skills, cognitive stylistics, verbal irony, cognitive metaphor, image–schema, figure and ground, implicature, contextual effects, relevance, aboriginal poetry and EFL.

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1. Background

Ethiopian literature has existed for centuries, initially written in Geez and then Amharic, the national language of over 82 million Ethiopians. With the desire to reaching out to a larger audience, a handful of indigenous writers started exploiting English as the language of imaginative writing in the 1960s. Even today, English is not the language which dribbles into the soul of the ordinary people in Ethiopia. However, the expansion of higher education, the expansion of printing presses, the growth of Ethiopia's diplomatic relations, the presence of the African Union headquarters in the country, the presence of multinational companies and the effects of globalization have greatly contributed and raised the level of English to the literary and official language status now. Recently few writers have taken up Oromiffa, Tigrigna and a few other indigenous languages as the languages of literary writing and official communication.

With the mushrooming of higher education institutions in Ethiopia, many universities now deliver postgraduate programs in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) or Literature. Many of the literature post graduate programs focus on classical British literature or modern American creative writing. In many cases, "African Literature" as a major course is added to the curriculum. And yet African Literature means Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiongo or Nadine Gordimer. Should African Literature be limited only to Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa? How about the Diaspora literature which raises latest issues facing the entire African continent? How about the indigenous writers grappling with the complexities of the English language as a medium of creative writing?

It is very significant to acknowledge that some Universities in Ethiopia have gone one step to include "Ethiopian Literature in English" as a major postgraduate course. However, postgraduate students and their teachers in the postgraduate program are challenged with local poetic concepts presented in a foreign medium. Lack of appropriate teaching methods at postgraduate level has been a real problem. Does this 'local' literature have any cognitive relevance at all? Does this literature play any role in enhancing the consciousness of the people? Have the students and teachers understood or misunderstood the poets? Have these students properly interpreted these works? Amidst linguistic barriers, does the writer have any cognitive role in the society? It has often been said that Ethiopian diasporas use creative writing in English as the safest weapon to reach out to an internationally dominant and powerful reader-cum-leader and secure wider and greater consciousness to overthrow a "dictator back home". In order to address these basic questions and assumptions, some exemplary poems by Solomon Deressa and Tekola Hagos were purposefully selected and interpreted. Over a period of two years, a total of 20 postgraduate students who took a course: "Stylistics for Language Teaching and learning" were asked to analyze, interpret and present these poems following a cognitive stylistics method. In these semesters, similar questions appeared in the final exam papers. Their FGDs, presentations and test results were captured and included in this study.

2. Problem Statement

In the Ethiopian higher education and scholarship contexts, postgraduate educators, researchers and students often lack appropriate methods for the teaching and learning of poetry. Consequently, the comprehension and interpretation of literary texts become often subjective. In such contexts, intuitions are more trusted than stylistics procedures. A subjective interpretation of literary texts is not often supported by inputs/evidence from the texts. This might also lead to

rushed generalisations about the work and misunderstanding the author. Due to the absence of acceptable course delivery methods, Ethiopian literature in English as a subject is often excluded from the curriculum. In territory contexts and in classroom situations, the absence of methods of acceptable literary interpretation often places the teacher in an awkward confrontation with challenging postgraduate students. A cognitive theoretic approach can support educators, students and researchers to bridge this gap and help bring Ethiopian literature in English in general and poetry in particular to the status of tertiary scholarship.

2. Hypothesis

A cognitive stylistics method does not contribute to the teaching and learning of Ethiopian poetry at a tertiary level.

3. Objectives

This research was conducted to:
- enhance the relevance of cognitive stylistics as a methodological tool for the teaching and learning of poetry at a tertiary level in Ethiopia,
- increase the analytical skills of postgraduate students,
- develop the poetry writing skills of postgraduate students.

4. Cognitive Stylistics Approach

4.1. Basic Assumption

The cognitive stylistics model developed hereunder was gleaned mainly from the works of Wilson, Sperber, Freeman, Steen and Burk. While developing this model, concepts such as verbal irony, cognitive metaphor, image–schema, figure and ground, implicature, contextual effects and relevance were weaved. A critical examination of these cognitive tools implies that cognitive stylistics differs from both formalist and functionalist stylistics models. Cognitive stylistics places cognition and contextual effects at the heart of its analytical space. Both formalist and functionalist stylistics models place the sentence and the text respectively at the center of their analysis. They are chiefly text-immanent models. The cognitive stylistics model, however, is a departure from textualist to contextualist stylistics interpretation of a text. "The broadest view of cognition takes into account all the mental activities associated with tasks such as thinking, knowing, communicating and remembering. As such, despite claims to the contrary, cognition must be deeply embedded in culture" (Burk 2005:198). Defining some major assumptions in cognitive stylistics, Cronquist highlights the relevance of readers' response in text analysis. According to this argument, cognitive stylistics:
1. looks not just at the text, but at the mind's contribution to reading
2. explores how certain types of linguistic items (e.g. pronouns) can only be understood using the reader's knowledge, beliefs and inferences
3. studies the impact of foregrounding devices on readers
4. observes (using literary (linguistic) "reader response "or psychological techniques) the attention that readers pay to the text, the memory that readers have for what they have read and the different interpretations they have
5. Examines the cognitive processes involved in understanding the "poetic" features studied by traditional stylisticians, e.g. cognitive linguistic and cognitive stylistic research on metaphors and similes (Cronquist 2003:1).

The present research held a complimentarist view. The cognitive model complimented both the formalist and the functionalist models. The following cognitive tools were entwined to develop the poetry writing skills of postgraduate students in an EFL context.

4.2. Basic Components of the Cognitive Stylistics Model

4.2.1. Verbal Irony
In the definition of verbal irony as a cognitive stylistic tool, Wilson and Sperber interlace contextual effects and implicatures of each utterance. They justify and exemplify that each utterance has relevance and plays a significant role in changing the assumptions and the beliefs of the listener. "Some effect is achieved in terms of alterations to the individual's beliefs: the addition of contextual implications, the cancellation of existing assumptions, or the strengthening of the existing assumption" (1996:271). They argue that verbal irony involves an expression of an attitude of disapproval: "An ironical utterance carries suggestion of disapproval … which cannot be made entirely explicit in propositional form … on the other hand, our analysis of irony … crucially involves the evocation of attitude – that of the speaker to the proposition mentioned. This attitude may imply a number of propositions, but it is not reducible to a set of propositions" (qtd in Wilson and Sperber 196:274).

Since the communication act involves an intention to modify the listener's cognitive environment, the implicature of an ironic statement can be comprehended with the support of tone, voice, facial expressions and accompanying gestures. The reader of a poem, on the other hand, can use the contextual effects to determine the relevance and the implicature of an ironic statement in the poetic text and discover the opposite of what has been communicated.

Wilson and Sperber argue that human beings automatically aim at maximal relevance; that is, a maximal contextual effect for a minimal processing effort. Any utterance addressed to someone automatically conveys a presumption of its own relevance. Relevance results due to contextual effects and processing effort (196:271-272). This argument implies that to determine the relevance of an ironic statement in a poetic text, the reader of the poem should exert a minimum processing effort. Therefore, it is conceptualized that tropes such as irony can be taught basically to develop the cognitive abilities of the leaner.

4.2.2. Cognitive Metaphor

The second relevant tool in a cognitive stylistic interpretation of a poetic text is cognitive metaphor. Diverse procedures of cognitive metaphor identification exist although cognitive metaphor researchers agree on the characteristics, creations, sources and the definition of the tool as a figure of speech. There are claims which argue that it arises from "the experientialist position of semantic theory" (Freeman 1996:281). According to this claim, a cognitive metaphor is created by "projecting onto an abstract target domain the entities and the structure of a concrete source domain, a schematized real or vicarious bodily experience" (Freeman 1996:281). In this view, our physical experience which is greatly shaped by our cultural experience is a rich source of cognitive metaphor. Cognitive metaphor scholars such as Lakoff, Freeman and Steen consider culture and bodily experiences as the major sources of cognitive metaphor.

In defining a cognitive metaphor, Freeman (Ibid) presents image schema, which is shaped by culture as a source of cognitive metaphor elucidating from *King Lear*. In his research of this play, Freeman justifies that the major springs of cognitive metaphor in the play include: BALANCE, LINK and PATH. He shows that the BALANCE schema is like a blindfolded lady holding a two-pan scale. The LINK schema, on the other hand, springs from the bonding relations with our

mother. This parental relation is extended to relatives, families, in-laws and the society. It is naturally bi-conditional because A is linked to B and only if B is linked to A (1996:287). Finally, the PATH schema entails such salient features as opening and terminal marks and sequences of location that connect the beginning and the end (1996:293). Freeman's research shows that the fundamental sources of the cognitive metaphor in *King Lear* are understood by analyzing these schemas. In this metaphor research, Burk identifies three main cognitive metaphor types: 1) structural cognitive metaphor as in "LIFE IS A JOURNEY", 2) Ontological cognitive metaphor like "THE MIND IS AN OCEAN" and 3) Orientation cognitive metaphor as in " HE IS ON A HIGH TODAY"(Burk 2005:190).

A revealing research on the procedures of metaphor identification was conducted by Steen and his Peglezac research group. In this research, five basic steps of identifying a cognitive metaphor can be followed. These are identification of:

1. metaphorical focus
2. metaphorical idea
3. metaphorical comparison
4. metaphorical analogy
5. metaphorical mapping (Steen 1)

In this study, a content word is used metaphorically "If it can give rise to a proposition, comparison, statement, analogy and finally mapping that is deemed to involve two domains of knowledge" (Steen 2002:1).

4.2.3.   Image Schema

The third significant tool in a cognitive stylistics analysis is image schema. Image schema as a valid cognitive stylistic tool is defined as the "recurring pattern of our everyday perceptual interactions and bodily experiences" (Burk 2005:189). This definition presents all image schemas not as sources of metaphor but as cognitive tools by themselves. They are also defined as "skeletal patterns or structures that recur in our sensory and motor experiences, perceptual interactions and cognitive operations" (qtd in Hiraga 1998:1). In Burk's research, salient sources of image schematic patterns include: 'up and down', 'in and out', 'source–path-goal', 'balance' and 'center-periphery'. Burk's research claims that these patterns are automatic, natural and are often used to make meaning of the world when new situations arise (2005:189).

4.2.4.   Figures and Grounds

While mapping the relationship between figure and ground as a cognitive stylistic tool, quoting Stockwell, Burke presents that "a figure can be a character or location and it is often 'new' or 'in motion' and thus prominent or salient" (qtd in Burk ibid:189). A figure is presented to be a self-contained, foregrounded, moving, timely and focused attractor in poetry. A figure can be one of the following: i) a self-contained object with well-defined edges; ii) in motion as opposed to static; iii) earlier in time, nearer the viewer in space; iv) part of the ground that has broken away; v) more detailed or better focused or brighter than the ground; and vi) on top of or in front of or larger than the ground (Burk ibid: 198). It is brighter and detailed attention than the ground which is the opposite and known as 'neglect' (Burke Ibid: 189).

Generally, interpreting verbal irony, cognitive metaphor, image schema, figure and ground coupled with active learning methods was conceptualized to enhance the teaching and learning of poetry at a tertiary level.

5. Methods and Procedures

Following the review of previous works presented in the previous section, this section presents the methods and procedures. Two poems were selected from Ethiopian poetry in English and were taught to postgraduate students taking stylistics as a major course. During the pilot study, the teaching staff and postgraduate students recommended the inclusion of Ethiopian poetry in English. Consequently, two poems: Solomon Deressa's "Ring the Child Alive" and Tokola Hago's "Born to Live" were selected. The classroom experimentation followed three stages. In the first stage, the analysis of verbal irony was followed by the analysis of cognitive metaphor. Then, figures and grounds were investigated. Lastly, the experimentation and interpretation were chiefly geared towards the contribution of cognitive stylistics to creative writing and creative thinking capabilities of the learners in an EFL context. Pre- and post-tests were also scheduled and properly conducted as illustrated below.
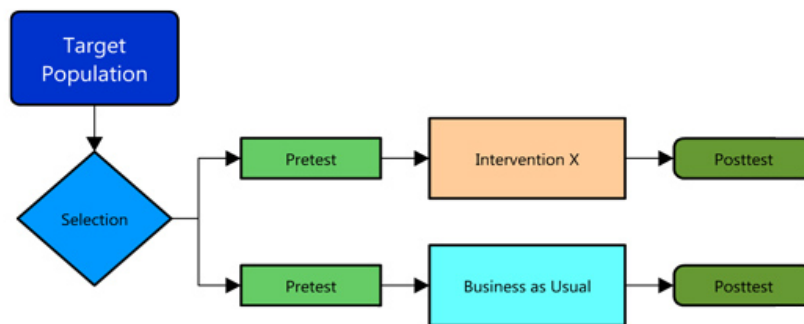
(http://www.nationaltechcenter.org/)

The research was conducted on the basis of an experimental research design which was started in 2013 and ended in 2014. A total of 20 students participated in the study. These students were again classified into experimental group (10) and control group (10) randomly. The students in the experimental group took a unit in the course through a cognitive stylistics method. Areas in the cognitive stylistics unit included: verbal irony, cognitive metaphor, image–schema, figure and ground, implicature, contextual effects, relevance and aboriginal poetry. Active learning methods (ALM) were also integrated into the cognitive stylistic framework so that the students could vigorously dominate the learning and teaching of poetry. However, the students in the comparison group took the same course with a traditional teaching method. Prepared notes and lectures on themes, techniques, figures of speech and literary elements were given. The teacher-cum-researcher often dominated the teaching and learning process. Each group was given similar pre- and post-tests, designed specifically for this research purpose. Before the classroom experiment was carried out, a pilot study was conducted in 2013 with a different group of postgraduate students. The selection of the poems and the revision of the tests were finalized after the pilot study was completed. Selected lecturers of literature and writing courses in the University critically reviewed the tests.

6. Discussions and Major Findings

6.1. Verbal Irony in "Ring the Child Alive"

While reading a poem like "Ring the Child Alive", contextual effects can be created. These effects are related to thinking, remembering and knowing. The reader is made to stop and think and remember the past. How is that contextual effect created? Does the effect change the assumption and belief of the reader? Does the contextual effect suggest disapproval? Reading a poem must evoke a certain kind of attitude and must have relevance with a minimal processing effort. Creating this background discussion with postgraduate students that reading a poem can create contextual effects and has relevance, the following thought bubbling questions were given to the students. Students were instructed to work in a group of three or four and report to the class at the end:

TASK:
1. Give examples of ironic statements from "Ring the Child Alive".
2. What is the relevance of each ironic statement in the poem?
3. Do these ironic statements produce contextual effects?
4. Give examples of ironic statements from your own culture. Why do people in your culture use ironic statements?
5. Is there any significant relation between the use of ironic statements and simile or metaphor in your culture?
6. Do you think that ironic statements develop your own creative writing and creative thinking skills?

Group representatives reported that a first impression of reading "Ring the Child Alive" produces several contextual meanings each of which requires various kinds of processing efforts. Group members were asked to list the ideas in the form of thought bubbles and analyze the meanings of the word "Ring" in the title. Thoughts like engagement ring, telephone box, bell, marriage ceremony, waking someone up, church wedding and a priest were listed. It was the idea of waking a child up who lost a proper life style which the contextual meaning of the word "Ring" in the title implied. Awakening is implied in the poem to bring the child back to a normal life style. With this understanding of the title of the poem, students were told to identify examples of ironic statements. Groups responded that in the following context, the understatement "A child is a child alive or dead" is an ironic statement:

> A child is a child alive or dead,
> He told himself, and years do not count
> So much as the colour of shells
> They are foot-prints on the sand.

The speaker of the statement knows very well that a child who is alive and a child who is dead are not the same. The implication and the comparison are made on the basis of the thinking capacity of the child. The child of the poem lost his way and the ability to think. Although the years or the age of the child matters, the poet presents it ironically. It is the opposite of what the poet (speaker) has said that is true. When we find out the implication of the statements, we change our attitude towards the child. We consider this as if the child were dead because the child is a total wastrel.

Secondly, as the title of the poem implies, the advice is to 'ring' the child alive. Ringing the child will bring him back to the normal life of the society. However, the opposite is communicated in the lines below:

And make bells of shells
Turn the sea into a gong
To ring the child alive
Disturbing his innocent slumber
And lull him back to sleep

The entire context of the lines above presents a situational irony. As indicated earlier, the child is a waif and lost his thinking ability. Attempts should not be made to "Lull him back to sleep." Instead, efforts must be made to "ring him alive". This is another situational irony in the poem.

Students were asked to give examples of ironic statements from their own culture. The exercises were designed to help them develop their poetry writing and creative thinking skills. Some of the images or ironic statements might be used while writing a poem. The students wrote the following statements first in Amharic and later translated:

1. She is the most 'beautiful' girl in our village.
2. "Drive 'slowly'! I'm in a hurry!"
3. She is as 'tall' as a hen. She can't marry our son.
4. Her hair can tie our 'horse.' I know her hair is kinky.
5. "My 'clever' son! You failed in all your exams."
6. Your 'melodious and sonorous' songs brought all the birds of the sky to our beloved land.
7. Red fox said, "When the hunter began shooting, I stopped 'flying'."
8. A woman told her neighbor, "This small child of yours is bigger than an 'elephant'."
9. Life is 'cheaper' in the city than in our village.
10. When her mother died, she cried like a 'crocodile'.
11. We 'thank' you for 'littering' the village!
12. She is as fast as a 'tortoise'.
13. He is always as busy and fast as a 'bee'. He likes procrastinating work all the time.
14. The 'chair' has changed the chairperson.
15. I have never eaten such a 'delicious' meal in my life.
16. My son has 'grown up' and started breaking the glass.
17. "Great 'job' done, my son! Tear your shirt if you want me to buy you a new one tomorrow."
18. His support to Ethiopia is as 'small' as the Nile River.
19. The bride and the groom had a 'bright night' yesterday. It was a complete black-out in the city.
20. "Do not ever 'use' a stick if you want to spoil your son!" the parent said.
21. "If you find education irrelevant, try 'ignorance'", the teacher advised his student.

Students reported the existence of significant links between ironic statements and similes/metaphors as exemplified above. They commented that traditional people use similes and metaphors to make ironic comments.

6.1.2   Cognitive Metaphor

In "Ring the Child Alive", the poet chiefly employs "LINK" and "PATH" schemas as sources of cognitive metaphors. The "LINK" schema which springs from kinship relations is realized through the addressor (possibly the father) and addressee, that is, the child in the poem. The addressor is presented as a caring parent searching for a lost child. The child, on the other hand, is a waif and has lost his kinship roots. As expressed in the lines below, the addressor compares the child with the dead:

His temper it is, he thought
Though it's his mind he lost
Gathering waif ends and shells
Combing a cold deserted beach
For a child a thousand years dead

To bring the child alive, attempts such as ringing him up, raising a cathedral, making bells of shells and lulling him back to sleep are recommended. The child combs and gathers waif- ends and shells. It is the parental love and concern that forces the addressor to continue the search for the lost child.

The 'PATH' schema is realized through the child's journey in the waste land. The gerunds "gathering" and "combing" show his lost journey. He is a scoundrel and wastrel. He gathers oddments and shells for a living. The ebb and the foot-print on the sand are indications of a "PATH" as expressed in the lines below:

So much as the colour of shells
They are foot-prints on the sand
And the ebb will wash them out
And if the flow falls stubbornly short
Why then we shall raise a cathedral

Metaphorically, all the qualities of the children are given to the foot prints on the sand. The ebb will wash them out. The attributes of the sea and gong, beach and human being, telephone and the child, the flow of the sea and the child are also compared.

TASK
Having discussed irony and metaphor, students were asked to think about the metaphors of their culture and to give at least five examples. The following examples of metaphors were given by the students:

1. The father is the bread of life.
2. The horse is riding a horse.
3. Experience is a university.
4. A husband is an umbrella for his wife.
5. Thought is an ocean.
6. I saw a stone sitting on another stone. (Stone and a fool are one and the same.)
7. Knowledge is light.
8. A great book is a great friend.
9. Loneliness is a prison.
10. She is a rat.
11. She is a parrot.
12. He is a spider.

While writing metaphorical examples, several wild life examples such as: snake, eagle, hyena, lion, horse, tiger, bull, donkey, elephant, frog, dog and pig were given by the students. They were informed that they could use these models to write their own examples of metaphors while writing poems of their own. The interpretation and writing of these examples were assumed to help students think about specific details which lay the foundation for creative writing.

6.1.3   Figure and Ground

Students were asked to think about the figures and grounds in the poem. The relevance and contextual effects of the figure and ground were discussed. In "Ring the Child Alive", images are coherently organized so as to make the child an attracting and prominent figure. When students first read the title, it called for their attention to ring the child alive. The child is presented as a new, moving, focused, attracting and timely figure. He gathers waif-ends and shells. Physically emaciated, the child breaks away from the traditional life style of the society. The figure is foregrounded. It is better focused and brighter than the ground. Students reported that in the poem, the cold and deserted beach is presented as a colorful but deserted ground. Other figures such as sand, cathedral, sea, ebbs, shells, sand and gong give life to the deserted ground. They are coherent while beautifying the scenic beauty of the land near the sea.

6.2.   A Cognitive Stylistic Analysis of Tekola Hagos's "Born to Die"

In this section, the analysis focuses on situational irony, cognitive metaphor, simile, figures, grounds and contextual effects. After practicing the exercises and carrying out a descriptive writing practice, ample time was given to the students to think creatively and write a short poem on "Born to Live" following Tekola Hagos's "Born to Die" as a model poem.

6.2.1   Situational Irony

A comprehensive understanding of all the elements of poetry in Tekola Hago's "Born to Die" challenged the students to question the meaning of life and death in general. Contextual effects were recreated so that students could stop and think, remember and realize the momentary existence of life. Life lessons were learnt. The basic question is: does the poem change the assumption of the students towards death? Does the student continue to suspend his/her disbelief of death? The students were given the following tasks:

TASK
1. Form a group of three to locate examples of situational irony in the poem. Use active learning methods such as thought bubbles, pyramiding and spider diagram while describing situational irony.
2. Do the situational irony and the group debate have any relevance in changing your attitude towards life and death?
3. Do the situational irony exercises help you think and write creatively? How?

It can be vividly observed that "Born to Die" presents the three stages of life: birth, growth and death. The co-existence of birth, growth and death makes the major figure clear. The poem implies that human beings often do not make any border between the time of life and death. Once they come into existence, life presents the sources of pleasure which often make them temporarily suspend death.

In the poem, life is presented as grace, beauty and love. Human beings are endowed with sense organs to experience the sensual luxuries life has to offer. Sense organs allow lovers to experience pleasure. It is this ecstatic experience which exhumes the idea of death. The disparity between luxurious experience and unavoidable death places human beings in the situational irony.

The second stage presents death as a journey which is often suspended:

> These men, that move back and fro
> Know not their goal, no where they go
> But like actors who do play their part
> Vanish like mirage and become the past

The situational irony appears to be more dramatic in these lines. At a young age, people including the poet, engrossed in the pleasures of life temporarily suspend the thought of death. Even if the poet reminds the reader to stop and think about death, the readers are completely consumed by the pleasures of life that people are thinking about. They are not only suspending the idea, they live under an illusion of its non-existence to the extent that it is difficult to command their attention for anything but pleasure. The poet presents a piece of advice to the reader which implies a situational irony:

> But to man I have a word
> Live your way and change not for good
> Lovers sucking each other's tongue
> Are not aware of death's approach

This situational irony helps us stop and think about death's approach. Is it possible for the lovers to stop kissing and begin thinking of death? Does the situation allow the process of thinking about death? The ultimate realization of death might even lead to the termination of the pleasures of life. It is this disparity which is implied throughout the poem. In the last stage, the poet presents the arrival of death which none can avoid. The collocation of the arrival of death makes the process more frustrating. Words like 'vanish', 'past', 'dust', 'rust', 'tombstone', 'decay', 'regret' and 'eat away' describe and define the meaning of death. Death is inevitable:

> Nothing is unusual, but a natural course
> Lips that once kissed, heart that once loved,
> Like the tombstone will forever be cold.

Human biological organs such as lips, tongues and hearts, which were once the channels of pleasure and were once sensitive enough to feel, have been reduced to the numbness of a tombstone. They become cold through natural processes of fermentation, rust, dust and decay. Living in ecstasy leads us to change our life style and we fail in coming to terms with DEATH courageously. The ultimate effect of this situational irony is to suspend death temporarily.

6.2.2.   Simile in "Born to Die"

In the same manner human beings are kept in an ironic world and challenged to question the disparity between life and death; several objects and images are built so that people can compare themselves. The comparison intensifies the contextual effects so that the reader can realize the difference between inanimate objects and human organs. What is the difference between heart and stone? Is there any difference between dust and lips? Can we differentiate the tongue from rust? With these leading questions in mind, students identified the following examples of similes from the poem:

1. Men like actors play their parts.
2. Men vanish like a mirage.
3. Grace, beauty and love is fermented like rust.
4. Hearts once loved will be cold like the tombstone.

Human organs are compared with inanimate objects because through the process of death they will be changed into dust and rust. They become one and the same through time. The people are actors on the stage. Time merges life with lifeless.

TASK
After the analysis of the contextual effects of similes, students were asked to give examples of some similes which are often used to speak about life, growth and death in their own culture. Accordingly, the following were given:
1. Mature girls and boys are like ripen fruits.
2. Life is like an egg; you have to handle it with care.
3. Young children are like trees.
4. You have to swim like a swan to live successfully.
5. He died like a lion in the forest.
6. Beauty vanishes like leaves.
7. Death ate him like a pig.
8. Death is as near as the Nile River.
9. She has lived like a dog.
10. She died like a hyena.

While practicing writing examples of similes from their own culture, students were informed that the exercises above aimed at creative thinking and writing. Later on they will be composing their own poems using figurative language abundantly.

6.2.3   Cognitive Metaphor in "Born To Die" for Creative Writing

In "Born to Die", Tekola Hagos chiefly executes the "LIFE IS A JOURNEY" schema as the main source of cognitive metaphor. This schematized "PATH" is made vivid through travel words such as 'move', 'go', 'approach', 'way', 'back', 'fro', 'vanish', 'where' and "free". As expressed in the lines below, life is a journey:

> These men, that move back and fro
> Know not their goal, no where they go
> But like actors who do play their part
> Vanish like mirage and become the past

These lines also imply a 'source - path- goal' schema as an unavoidable bodily experience and this becomes the source of a cognitive metaphor. This schema follows Birth → Growth→ Death as the major route. In the poem, a metaphorical expression is used when the poet brings his entire struggle to nothingness:

> When I reflect, all my struggles were nought.
> Regret and sorrow eat away my heart

In the lines above, regrets and sorrows are given human attributes. All the qualities of his struggle are compared with nothingness.

6.2.4   Figure and Ground for Teaching Descriptive Writing

It was indicated that the analysis of situational irony, simile and cognitive metaphor helped the students to find ideas for describing the major figure and ground of the poem. These figures of speech created dependable situations so as to see the prominent figure of the poem.

TASK: Students were asked to describe the qualities of the figure and ground in the poem.

The prominent figure of the poem is the man. Passing through three stages of life, the man assumes various qualities in each stage. In the first stage, the man moves, loves and attracts. In this stage, the man walks aimlessly in search of the worldly pleasures of life. In the second stage, the man who has been acting actively in the world of life vanishes like a mirage. The beauty, grace and love disappear completely. In the last stage, the man undergoes death. Through the processes of aging, the various organs of the man change into dust, rust and decay. "Like the tombstone forever be cold." The ground is the land in which people undergo changes. As is presented in the poem, while they are alive: joy, movement, grace, beauty and love prevail in the land, but when they die: regret, sorrow, dust, rust, and decay over take the same land. It is against this background that men are freed to move on earth and die on earth. Generally, the poem presents a man suspending death temporarily. This temporary suspension stops when the unification of the figure with the ground becomes a reality.

7.   The Pedagogic Relevance of Cognitive Stylistics

7.1. Developing Critical Thinking

The proper knowledge of language use and context awareness doesn't always guarantee the creative writing competence and the critical thinking ability of the learner. EFL students who use context dependent language fluently and appropriately may not still use language creatively because creative writing and thinking requires unique ways of selecting and organizing words and sentences so as to flesh out feelings, frustrations, emotions and experiences creatively. Consequently, the experiment on cognitive stylistics was required. In this experiment, the following basic questions were raised:
1. Can we teach creative thinking in the EFL classroom through the stylistics method?
2. Can the cognitive stylistics method promote the creative competence of EFL learners?
3. Can Ethiopian poems in English be models for creative writing?
4. Is creativity born or gained through training?
5. Does linguistic competence develop the ability to write and think creatively?

To find out valid and reliable answers to these questions, the following null hypothesis was tested: **HYPOTHESIS: A cognitive stylistics method does not contribute to the development of the poetry writing skills of ELF learners**.

While testing this hypothesis, exercises were framed so as to help the students think in terms of images and metaphors. The exercises and active learning methods were designed to help students remember, reflect, think and rationalize. The exercises on writing examples of simile, metaphor and personification were connected with mental processes. While writing examples of figures of speech, students were prepared to think about their own cultures, families, schools, domestic and wild animals and villages. They also exchanged ideas. The exercises on figures of speech were both engaging and intriguing because the students found interesting to comment on their peers' choice of examples of figures of speech. They also learnt from each other. Besides the class room exercises, the test included contents such as:

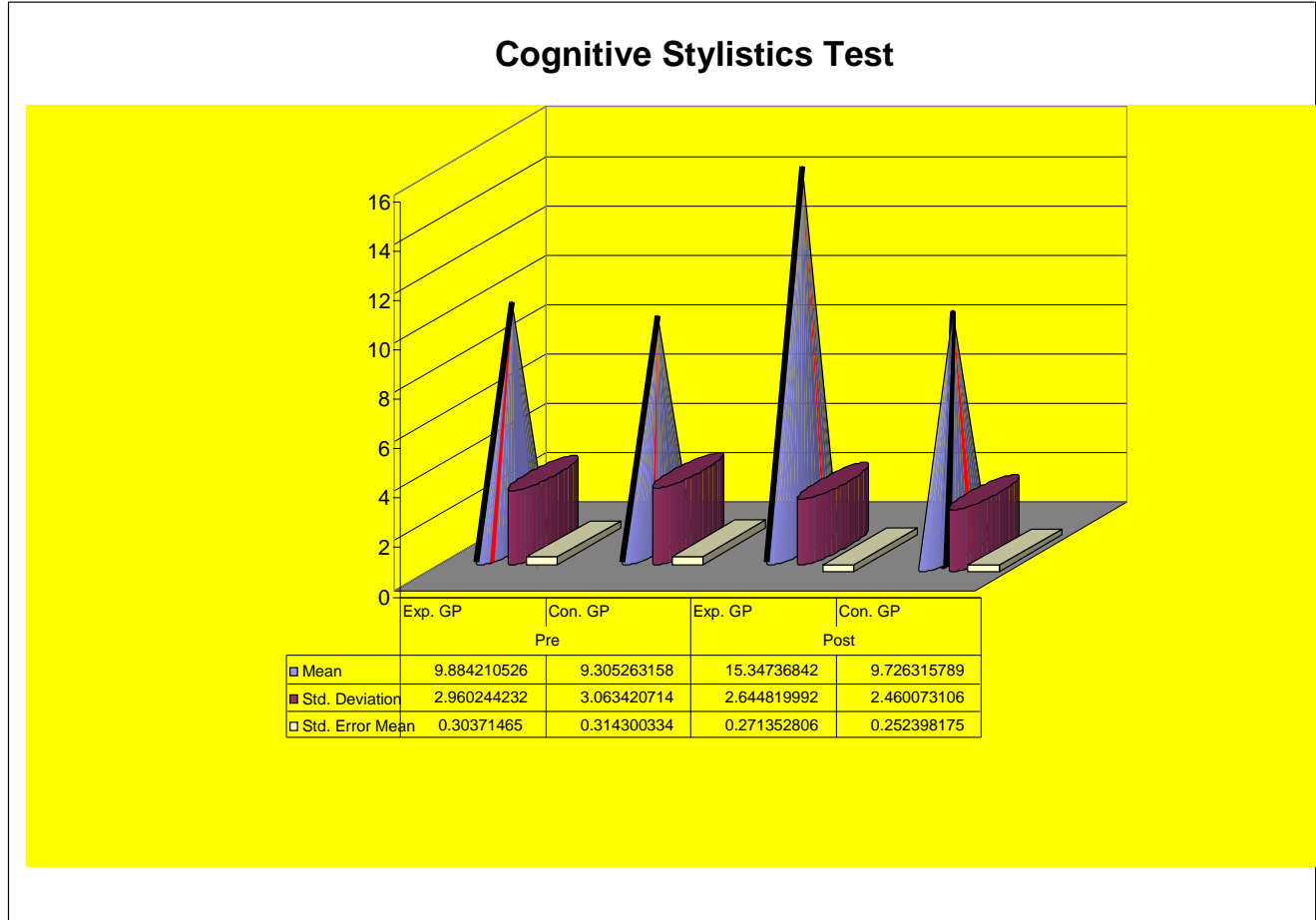- Relevance of contextual effects
- Cognitive metaphor in the poems

- Verbal irony and personification in the poems studied
- Figures of speech from their own culture
- Image schema and
- poetry writing exercises

Compared to the students in the control group, students under the experimental class:
- Used wild and domestic animals figuratively
- Used alliteration , assonance and rhyme more pervasively than the control group
- Tried to deviate from the normal sentence structures than the control group
- Placed words properly for phonetic and semantic effects.
- Wrote meaningful poems

After the completion of the course, both sample groups took a test out of 20. Students in the experimental group studied the poems following the cognitive stylistics methodology. The bar graph below presents a summary of the t-test results for pre- and post-tests for the cognitive stylistics module.

Independent Samples Test for Cognitive Stylistics

Cognitive Stylistics Test

	Exp. GP	Con. GP	Exp. GP	Con. GP
	Pre	Pre	Post	Post
Mean	9.884210526	9.305263158	15.34736842	9.726315789
Std. Deviation	2.960244232	3.063420714	2.644819992	2.460073106
Std. Error Mean	0.30371465	0.314300334	0.271352806	0.252398175

The graph above shows the analysis of the mean test score for sample groups, standard deviation and standard error mean. As the mean pretest score shows in the graph, both the control and experimental groups performed differently in their cognitive stylistics pretest which was calculated out of 20%. The other 80% of the course was allotted to other units in the course. The experimental mean score, which was 9.88, was a little bigger than the control mean score of 9.31. The t-test result for the pre-test also shows that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of both the experimental and control group.

The t-test results for both pre and post-tests for cognitive stylistics unit were also calculated. As the mean pretest score showed, both the control and experimental groups performed differently in their creative writing pretest. The experimental mean score which was 9.88 was a little bigger than the control mean score of 9.31. But, the t-test result for the pre-test also showed that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of both the experimental and control groups. However, the t-value of the cognitive stylistics post-test was 15.168 and 9.726. The table value of t-critical was 2.10 with 18 degree of freedom and at a significance level of 0.05. Because the t-value of 15.168 was much greater than the t-critical value of 2.10 for two tailed test, at 0.05 level of significance for 18 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, the cognitive stylistics method enhances poetry teaching and learning in a tertiary context in Ethiopia. It was then recommended that poetry teachers can integrate the cognitive stylistics method while teaching poetry at postgraduate level.

7.2. Developing Creative Writing

Creative writing heavily relies on creative thinking. To prepare students to write creatively, first they were trained to think in terms of cultural metaphors, irony and simile. They were encouraged to use the domestic and wild animals, cultural metaphors of their own society, family figures and village life metaphorically. They were made to be familiar with figurative language. Identification of images, figures, metaphors and similes in "Born to Die" and "Death in Me" was carried out in the class. Students were prepared to write their own poems. The following four poems were few examples written by students of the experimental and control class. Both groups were told to read and take Tekola Hagos's "Born to Die" as a model and asked to write a poem entitled "Born to Live". They were also given some guidelines:

Some Guidelines for Poetry Writing

1. Your first stanza should answer the questions below:
    - A. What makes life happy?
    - B. What should be avoided to live happily?
    - C. Does success lead to happiness?
    - D. Does "failure" fail life?
2. Give pieces of advice, in the second stanza, to the rest of humanity so that people can live happily.
3. Use figures of speech abundantly whenever appropriate.
    - A. Write similes, metaphors and personifications about life, growth and death whenever you find applicable.
    - B. Great if you can use the domestic and wild animals, cultural metaphors of your own society, family figures and village life metaphorically.

30

4. Choose and place proper words in their proper places for their musical and semantic reasons.
5. Defamiliarize the structures and types of your own sentences.
6. Defamiliarize word usage and combination for sound and meaning reasons if possible.
7. Maintain sound effects through rhyme, alliteration and assonance.

These were a few guidelines used in the classes while teaching poetry writing. In the exam, all students were instructed to allocate 30 minutes to this particular question. The same title was given to the students while taking the posttest:

1. Sample poem from the experimental group

Born to Live
Men who live in the foggy rocks
Understand when death knocks.
For them life is an Easter.
Follow the rhythm of your country river.
Make no mountains out of a hill small.
Life is a football.
Compose your own funeral dirge
Tune your guitar on the stage
Never pillage your own village
Ship your fox in your ship
Know your goat marries your sheep
Enjoy, make your life cheep.
Enjoy, circumcised in the image of God
Cradle of humanity and source of pride
Walk big, feel healthy and work hard to be wealthy.
To human race I have this to say:
No place is better than life
Walk big to fight grief
The poorest of the poor expires today
Tomorrow travels the wealthy and healthy
Next sails the millionaire
Finally cruises the billionaire
The grave is all the same
There is no sorrow! Over death, we're all the same.

2. Sample poem from the experimental group

Born to Live
My life was like a morning star
It was so clean with no scar.
Shinning all the day
Suspending death from my way
Laughter swallowed death forever
Happiness drowned the torture.
I know life is a lizard
When hungry eats its own brand

But to a man I have a word:
Live life today
Leave the rest astray

Depend on your godly might
Love your heavy night
Let others live alright.

3. Sample poem from the control group

Born to Live

I never think of my death
Always worked hard to get wealth
I have many goals
Before I die to accomplish these roles
Learn and work to finish
Never think of my death
Suspended hell and faith
Worked as hard as possible
I know death is cruel

To live happy and wealthy
I have a word to this man:
Don't think up and down
Black, white or brown
Use your creative mind.
Your life never be cold
You will shine like gold
Suspend death, life is diamond!

4. Sample poem from the control group

Born to Live

People living high and down
Do you know when to put on black gown?
You moan and groan for throne
With fellow brother, you fight like a bore
All will die closing life's door
I know life is short
When hungry bites your leg
But to a man I have a word:
Love your fellow creature
Think of your brother's future
Enjoy today till you sleep forever and ever

Compared to the poems composed by the students in the control group, the poems from the experimental class included more metaphors, similes, personifications and symbols. Since the students were told to write pieces of advice in the last stanza, all ideas that might make human beings happy were included. Some of these student-poets attempted to maintain alliteration, assonance and rhyme to create pleasant sound effects. To make the poems more rhyming, they used some syllabic and metrical patterns which are visible. These four samples are collected from the assignments of the students as part of the continuous assessment procedure. Therefore, if students were given ample time and training, they could have produced poems with a reasonably acceptable standard. Language can be used creatively.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1. Conclusions

It can be concluded that the students in the experimental group performed much better than the students in the control group due to the introduction of the cognitive stylistics methodology which created a smooth integration of active learning methods such as storytelling, pair discussion, reflection, presentation, role play, debate, cooperative learning, home works, creative writing, cooperative teaching and drawing pictures. Due to these active learning methods, students in the experimental group actively involved in the teaching and learning process unlike the students in the control group where the lecture method was predominant. It can also be concluded that students' active involvement in the teaching of literature contributed to the success of the students ultimately in the development of their own communicative competence.

It can also be concluded that the cognitive stylistics method enhances the teaching and learning of poetry at the postgraduate level in Ethiopia, which in turn develops the creative capabilities of students. The indigenous knowledge, the indigenous experience and the home-grown cultural practices can initiate and motivate a postgraduate student to be a creative writer and thinker. In the same manner, as they dance to the tunes familiar to them, indigenous texts can be models for the writing and teaching of poetry than literary texts with exotic themes. Therefore, these aboriginal writers can be taken as role models for creative writing and thinking. Guidance must be given by the teacher. The teacher's role is to present the guideline, the model writer and the model text to be imitated. Therefore, for the proper development of the creative capabilities of students in poetry class, it can be concluded that the use of cognitive stylistics as a literature and language teaching method is highly relevant.

8.2. Recommendations

Feasible, affordable and timely recommendations rely on sound research results to improve the teaching and learning of poetry in the Ethiopian higher education context. This is mainly because sound judgments made on the basis of sound data shall lead to affordable and feasible recommendations. It is the major responsibility of ELT curriculum and syllabus designers, text writers, ELT researchers, language policy makers, teachers and students for implementing the recommendations. It is their collaborative effort that can advance the betterment of the teaching of poetry writing skills in English in an EFL context.

The creative capability of EFL/ESL learners can be extended through Ethiopian poetry in English applying the cognitive stylistics method. It is recommended that the integration of active learning methods and cognitive stylistic practices has practical implication. Integrating the cognitive stylistics approach and active learning methods provides the teacher with the skill to practice student-centered language and literature teaching. Active learning methods such as storytelling, pair discussion, reflection, presentation, role play, debate, cooperative learning, home works, creative writing, cooperative teaching and drawing pictures should be effectively utilized while teaching and learning poetry. They can help the teacher reduce the use of traditional methods in poetry classes.

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Haileleul Zeleke Woldemariam is an Associate Professor at the Department of Communication, School of Human Sciences at the Polytechnic of Namibia (NUST). He graduated with a PhD in Stylistics, Literature and ELT from Punjab University, India (2009), MA in Stylistics and African Literature (Bangalore University, India/1997), MA in Sociology (RVU, Ethiopia), BA (Honour's) in Foreign Languages and Literature (AAU, Ethiopia/1990), Postgraduate Diploma in Research Methods (Bielefeld University, Germany), Higher Diploma in Teaching (ASTU, Ethiopia). While in Ethiopia, he worked as the Dean of School of Humanities and Law at Adama Science and Technology University and later as the Vice President for Research and Postgraduate Studies at Rift Valley University. His research interests include: the sociological relevance of literature, medical communication, ELT, intercultural communication and the sociological relevance of indigenous knowledge, among others. Currently, he is passionate about appropriate research methods and theories in researching the stylistic relevance of literature in teaching and learning the English language. His publication profile is rich with several journal papers and several conference presentations. In Ethiopia, he organized 12 national research conferences and founded the *Ethiopian Journal of Quality and Relevance Higher Education* and served as its chief editor for three years.   Haileleul has a number of grants and awards to his name including Gold Ring awarded by the President of Ethiopia, Mr Girma Woldegiorgis, and Gold Pin by the then Minister of Education, Dr Sintayehu Wolde-Michael, for his research contributions and projects at Adama Science and Technology University.

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