

# Literature and the Teaching of Stylistics: An Investigation Into the Pragmatics of Community Formation in the Educational Context of Namibia

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The author's paper is an attempt to investigate the success of the pedagogy of stylistics and pedagogical stylistics in the Namibian context. As an applied linguistics course, stylistics is eminently suitable for study and analysis of literature, because it clearly explicates literary effects through linguistic analysis. Many scholars have illustrated the use of stylistics analysis for the purposes of studying literature and teaching it, which is, pedagogical stylistics. However, this paper combines both the study of Stylistics as a discipline, which is the pedagogy of Stylistics, and the use of stylistics for teaching literature in general and poetry in particular. Namibia adopted English as its official language 22 years ago. Since then, both teachers and students have been struggling with the analysis of poetry. This study is an empirical one using qualitative methods in the author's research to determine the impact of the study of Stylistics on the understanding and teaching of literature in Namibia. The author uses traditional British poetry from the 16th century up to the 20th century alongside postcolonial poetry to assess the importance of culture in understanding poetry and examine the advantage of using stylistics to teach the poems that the author selects.

*Keywords:* pedagogy, pedagogical stylistics, foregrounding, parallelism, deviation, collocation, denotation, connotation, colligation

## Introduction

The interest in pedagogical stylistics in the field of English Studies has grown in the past five years. This can be attributed primarily to the fact that more and more non-native scholars have become cognizant of the usefulness of stylistics analysis in third world contexts, where teaching of English is riven with several issues, such as, lack of adequate funding for education by the government, lack of a well-developed language policy document, lack of clarity regarding the teaching of English, lack of trained and proficient teachers of English, lack of teaching materials that are relevant and context driven, and many other socio-cultural issues, particularly in the African continent, such as prevalence of HIV (Human Immuno-deficiency Virus) and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) and others. In such a scenario, empirical research has shown that pedagogy of stylistics and pedagogical stylistics<sup>1</sup> can contribute positively to community formation in order to bring about a radical change in the way language education itself is approached.

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<sup>1</sup> The author is grateful to Dan Mcintyre who made this distinction in the Poetics and Linguistics Association conference in Genoa, in 2010.

This paper is an attempt to capture the degree of success/failure of stylistics as a field of study and a tool of analysis in the Namibian context based on empirical research. In other words, the paper will examine both aspects of stylistics mentioned with a view to engaging with the complex issue of community formation. It is the author's proposition that pedagogy of stylistics and pedagogical stylistics function as signifier and signified, which are, by their very nature, interlinked and constantly double back on each other to create a phenomenon which is heterogeneous and exciting for research.

For the purposes of the author's argument, the author will allude to the followings: (1) historical and contextual background; (2) ESL (English as a Second Language) and English as a foreign language; (3) literature and language teaching; (4) stylistics vis-a-vis literary criticism; (5) review of stylistics; (6) presentation of the author's research and a discussion of the findings; and (7) conclusions.

### **Historical and Contextual Background**

Namibia, a South West African country with a population of 2.1 million people, gained its independence from South Africa in 1999 and the governing SWAPO (South West African People's Organisation) party chose English for political reasons as its official language in preference to the lingua franca, Afrikaans in a country where only 7% of the population spoke English. Namibia has been colonized by the Germans, British, and the South Africans over a period of its chequered history resulting in a melting pot of cultures and languages. Apart from Afrikaans and German, there are 10 indigenous languages which are national languages of the country. The Language Policy that was formulated tried to ensure that all languages would have an equal status. Wolfaardt (2010) pointed out the language policy clearly stipulated that the sole medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards would be English and that all children would have mother tongue instruction at the primary level. Even though research has proven that it is important and necessary for children to acquire basic cognitive skills in their mother tongue in the early years of childhood, and thereafter, switch to English for academic purposes, most schools opt for English from Grade 1 onwards in the belief that children should be immersed in English from day one. An investigation of the English proficiency of teachers has proven that most teachers having been trained in the old system of the pre-independent Namibia were weak in grammar and reading. Therefore, at pre-primary and upper primary level, children are being taught by teachers whose own proficiency in English is questionable. The communication approach to English language teaching was extensively adopted. Consequently, nearly 20 years after independence, despite all the changes that were effected, the standard of English in the country remains dismally low. The SACMEQ report<sup>2</sup> of 2004 investigated the literacy and numeracy of both students and teachers of 10 countries in the SADC (Southern African Development Community) region and it placed Namibia second last in ranking for students and below the average in the region for teachers. In a bid to improve the situation, four years ago the Namibian government introduced literature at Grade 10 and Grade 12, but the move met with a lot of resistance since the teachers themselves have not read sufficiently and therefore are reluctant to teach literature in general and poetry in particular.

During independence, two tertiary institutions were created by the government to provide undergraduate and postgraduate education to Namibian citizens: UNAM (University of Namibia) and the PON (Polytechnic of Namibia). While UNAM followed the route of a traditional university, PON was modeled on the German

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<sup>2</sup> The SACMEQ (Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality) Report: A Study of Schooling and the Quality of Primary Education in Namibia, December, 2004.

Fachhochschule, which are Universities of Applied Sciences, with a clear mandate to provide career-oriented and work-related education. The vision of PON is to be a premier university of science and technology educating leaders for the new economy, and its mission is to promote national competitiveness by providing multiple opportunities for excellent education applied research, innovation, and services. PON has grown exponentially in the past 10 years offering more than 60 programs across several disciplines at the undergraduate, honours, and postgraduate levels. With a view to alleviating some of the problems of English language teaching in the country, it was decided to develop a program offering a Bachelor of English and Bachelor of English Honours offering a combination of literature and linguistic subjects with a specialization in stylistics.

### **ESL and English as a Foreign Language**

Language Policy for Schools in Namibia Discussion Document of January 2003 (language planning and policy document) (2003) stated: “A second language is understood as one of which the learner has some knowledge and is exposed to regularly, because it is one of the main languages of the community” (p. 8).

Furthermore, it is “a language other than one’s mother tongue, used for a special purpose” (2003, p. 8), whereas the foreign language is one that is spoken outside the country of its origin. Beyer (2010) pointed out that, “Although officially English is regarded as a second language in Namibia, its status in pedagogical terms is that of a foreign language causing confusion as regards the methodology and approach to the teaching of the language” (p. 31). In a country where English is the main language for only 1.9% of the population (2001 Population and Housing census: Basic Analysis and Highlights, 2001, p. 48), this causes many problems. Lack of clarity with regard to the status of English as a second/foreign language has led to an adoption of the communicative method in teaching as a quick fix to address the problem. Most students in school are first generation learners growing up in single parent homes, because of socio-cultural problems like HIV and AIDS have also resulted in loss of lives. Severely handicapped, these students barely manage to pass their school grades and the ones who do, scrape through with a bare minimum having, acquired only speaking skills in English; as a consequence we have students at tertiary level who can speak fairly well, but display very low level writing skills and lack an interest in reading. Malaba (2010) stated, “Reading assists both L1 and L2 speakers to broaden their vocabulary, to familiarize themselves with the rhythms of the language, to gain confidence in speaking a language and to appreciate, incrementally, the aesthetic aspects of the language” (p. 2). However, this skill is neglected in the English language classroom.

The focus being on communicative activity required development of a communicative syllabus and production of materials organized around these principles (Howatt, 2000). Most courses provided “information gap” activities, role plays, simulations, and language games. In Namibia, the emphasis on the utilitarian aspect of English ensured that for nearly 15 years, literature was neither used for language teaching nor taught as a subject to second language learners. In 2006, the University of Cambridge exams which had been in place for nearly 15 years were dropped and the Namibian Senior Secondary School Certificate was introduced. While the syllabus for the former allowed for flexibility and choice between drama and prose, with the study of poetry being compulsory in first language English, the latter made the study of literature compulsory despite warnings by the First Language English Language Curriculum Committee and teachers. Haacke (2010) listed two main challenges of this curriculum: “An extensive syllabus has to be covered, demanding tasks require advanced intellectual and high degree of English language proficiency in a non-English environment” (p. 56). She states that only 13 schools in the country have opted to offer first language English owing to the fact that there are no proficient and trained

teachers in the country to teach literature to the detriment of a vast majority of schools in the country.

### **Literature and Language Teaching**

Literature teaching in the African continent is a contentious issue. The English language debate has been fiercely fought on both sides by those who have recognized the need to have English as an international language, like the famous writer Chinua Achebe and others and like Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and who believe that Africans should study their languages. Ngugi (1991) has raised objections to literature that was prescribed stating "Being a student of literature in Kenya today means being a student of English" (p. 224) and he called this "cultural imperialism" (p. 228). Brumfit (1986) argued for looking at literature as a skills subject in the Tanzanian context. He summarized the main aims of literature teaching in Tanzania thus:

(1) to consider language in action at its most effective by examining how language makes its effect, and considering works of literature as a social phenomenon; (2) ... to consider what creative writing is and to relate it to other arts; and (3) to give some appreciation of literature as a world-wide phenomenon. (p. 238)

Brumfit and Carter (1986) presented the interaction between literature, language, and education. The benefits of teaching literature in the third world cannot be over emphasized. Studying literature helps students to improve their language skills and develop their creative and critical thinking skills and imagination. McKay (1991, p. 193) has pointed out three main benefits of studying literature in the ESL classroom. She stated that literature can be useful in developing linguistic knowledge both at the level of "use and usage" (Widdowson, 1991). According to Widdowson, "usage" involves the knowledge of linguistics rules, whereas "use" requires knowledge of the rules for effective communication, which takes it to the pragmatic level. Secondly, through interaction with the text which they enjoy, students get motivated to read further, thus increasing their reading proficiency; and lastly, exposure to foreign literature promotes a greater understanding of that culture spurring on their own creative imagination. While McKay outlines three advantages to the study of literature, Littlewood (1991) presented a differing point of view. Arguing that literature was not qualitatively different from linguistic performance, Littlewood (1991) explained that a literary work was an example of the production of language for effective communication. He (1991) described literature in terms of linguistic levels: "language as a system of structures, language in a specific stylistic variety, language as the expression of a superficial subject matter and language as the symbolization of the author's vision" (p. 178). To the aforementioned four, he adds a fifth which has to do with history and biography located in time and place. These five perspectives provide the criteria for selection of texts for a course in English.

### **Stylistics vis-a-vis Literary Criticism**

The study of literature and literary criticism has created an elite class of scholars who are exclusionary in their approach to literature with the result students almost always feel diffident when it comes to engaging with it. With developments in literary theory, new and disputable ways of reading literary texts have emerged, which, instead of explicating or enlightening, problematize reading. Where the frame of reference is vastly different, and literature is read as a subject and not for enjoyment, nor for aesthetic purposes, the study of literature becomes a challenge. This issue is further complicated by the fact that at an individual level, the literary text lends itself to different interpretations. Widdowson (1992) pointed out that "Literary criticism of the traditional kind makes appeal to a theory of aesthetics which postulates artistic universals" (p. 140). While this may be baffling to first language learners, it proves to be insurmountable to second language learners. He (1992)

claimed that “Stylistics renders an essential service to language learning” (p. 148), because it created an awareness of how language functioned. Stylistics tackles the subjectivity and imprecision of literary criticism thereby demystifying literature and making it accessible to learners and providing a bridge that they can cross to different cultures and climes. Furthermore, stylistics extends the notion of practical criticism and seeks to make our intuitive responses to literature explicit. Pedagogical stylistics has aroused the interest of scholars in different parts of the world primarily because of the availability of the “tools” of stylistic analysis to students who do not belong to the Anglo-Saxon “interpretive community” (Fish, 1980). In fact, Cronquist (2007) argued that “The cognitive approach to literature and interpretation must proceed from detailed analysis and that such an analysis should aim at describing the shared intersubjectivity in the minds of the producers of the text and its recipients” (p. 20). Thus, pedagogical stylistic seeks to apply the insights gained from stylistic analysis to establish a teaching methodology which can become very useful and will have a great impact on literature and language in Namibia where English is not the first language and literature is not offered as a subject for study at the secondary school level, but only at post-secondary level. This brings the author to pedagogy of stylistics. How can stylistics be taught in a meaningful way to teachers to empower them, firstly, to analyze literary texts, secondly, to teach those texts as literature, and thirdly, to exploit the resources to teach language? Alternatively, how can literature be used to teach stylistics?

This paper is an attempt to answer the questions that have been posed. In addition, it explores the pragmatics of community formation through this exercise. Pedagogical stylistics enables and empowers literature teaching in the Namibian context. Additionally, it must also be pointed out that the teaching of stylistics itself is a minefield that has to be negotiated with caution, since it requires a selection of reading materials which will appeal culturally to the students, bringing with it attendant notions of post-coloniality and relevance, while at the same time falling in line with the language policy and planning issues of the country.

For the author’s purposes here, she would like to further her argument that the pedagogy of stylistics and pedagogical stylistics are interconnected and seamlessly flow into each other constantly creating a synergy which is exciting in the Namibian context.

### **Review of Stylistics**

Simpson (2004, p. 3) described stylistics as the practice of using linguistics for the study of literature. “Stylistics evolved from practical criticism as a methodology which attempted to bring about objectivity and rigor in the analysis of literature” (Simpson, 2004, p. 3). In a later book, Simpson (2004) extended the notion by stating that stylistics was a method of enquiry which was “rigorous”, “replicable”, and “retrievable” (p. 3). In other words, stylistic analysis is precise and objective; it can be taught and learnt. Stylistics brought about a democratization of principles of analysis along with intellectual vigor thereby ensuring that all students of literature had access not just to the aesthetics of the literary form but also to the hermeneutics of interpretation. The essential difference between literary stylistics and linguistic stylistics lies in the shift on emphasis on different aspects of the text. With literary stylistics, it is the literary element that takes primacy of place; on the other hand, with linguistic stylistics, the text becomes a model of language amenable to linguistic analysis for the furtherance of linguistic theory (Carter & Simpson, 1989, p. 4). For Fish (1980, p. 28), stylistics is the means of making the effect of literature on the reader explicit and he calls the examining of the transformation of experience “affective stylistics”. It is interesting to note that for Fish (1980) reader response is an integral element in engaging with a literary text and that a text, in and of itself, does not exist per se without being read,

imposing several variations in the reading and interpretations of texts. For Short (1996, p. 61), precisely because of its attention to detail and its linguistic rigor, stylistics proves to be complementary to literary criticism. The blurred and inexact nature of literary criticism is injected with a healthy dose of stylistic analysis to bring about an enrichment and insight into a text and its interpretation. This notion of stylistic has great relevance in the third world context where English is taught as a second language and literature can prove to be a formidable challenge due to the many constraints already outlined in this paper. In order to comprehend and evaluate the success of instruction of/in stylistics, it is found necessary to conduct an empirical study.

### **Research and Discussion**

The following section encapsulates the research in the Bachelor of English classroom, its findings, and a discussion of the main issues raised at the beginning of the paper.

#### **Research Objectives**

The main research objective was to evaluate the success of the pedagogy of stylistics with a view: (1) to help teachers to respond and articulate their responses to literature; (2) to provide them with a methodology and pedagogy for teaching; (3) to enable and empower teachers to become good in their profession; (4) and finally, through the teachers, to reach out to many students in the country to help them become better learners and readers.

#### **Research Methodology and Design**

This study uses qualitative method of analysis. While the sample size is small, the author would like to believe that the results can be conflated for a large section of English teachers in Namibia. The present research builds on two empirical studies<sup>3</sup> done in the areas of literature teaching in order to assess the impact of literature on reading and writing skills of students both in Windhoek, which is the capital of Namibia and in Oshakati, which is in the north. In terms of demographics, the two towns are vastly different, Windhoek being the capital of the country with an urban culture and Oshakati being largely rural in the orientation of its population. A total of 50 questionnaires for teachers were distributed in both the regions and 100 questionnaires were distributed to the students belonging to Grades 10, 11, and 12. While the two studies are not the focus of this paper, it is necessary to examine their findings for the author's purpose. Briefly, the study found that both teachers and learners agreed that literature had a positive impact on learners and that it improved both their reading and writing skills. Despite the positive response to literature, all teachers expressed their reservation about teaching it, stating that they were neither equipped nor trained to teach literature. The students expressed the opinion that there was a general paucity of interest in literature amongst them which they attributed to the teachers' lack of training. The studies show that most learners are interested in doing literature but feel diffident because of inadequate exposure to the different forms and traditions of literature. Both students and teachers stated that literature would be a good subject to study, because it would improve their vocabulary, widen their knowledge of the world, and communicate that literature would help with creative writing and critical thinking skills. They also stated that they would prefer to read texts which could resonate culturally with them. Some of the students and teachers were put off because of old materials. It was because of these findings that a questionnaire was developed to be administered to students of the Bachelor of English Honours in order to determine whether the teaching of stylistics would help to overcome some of the challenges that they had mentioned.

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<sup>3</sup> The author is grateful to her two students Tjara Kaputu and Victoria Magano at the Bachelor of English Honours level who undertook this study as part of their research.

**Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

It is very necessary at the very outset to delimit the study. Certain assumptions were made with reference to students who enrolled for the course: Firstly, they had enough knowledge of the English linguistics. The various theories of grammar, such as structural and transformational generative grammar and systemic grammar, were taught at the Bachelor of Education level, therefore it was assumed that students knew these grammars. Secondly, the level of English of the students was not tested based on the assumption that since they themselves were English teachers, they could speak, read, and write English well. Thirdly, the focus group consisted of teachers who had enrolled for the Bachelor of English Honours only. The study was constrained by the fact that the sample was a very small one consisting of only 10 teachers.

**Pedagogy of Stylistics and Pedagogical Stylistics-Teaching Methodology**

The distinction between the pedagogy of stylistics and pedagogical stylistics is crucial in the Namibian context, because it entails community formation. The control group consisted of 10 students who were teachers of English enrolled for the Bachelor of English Honours course at PON. At the very outset, the teachers were asked to write very briefly why they chose to enroll for this program. All of them stated that they wanted to gain more knowledge in literature and language. Further, they also wanted to gain confidence to teach literature, especially poetry to their students. All teachers had a Bachelor of Education degree with more than 10 years of teaching experience at secondary schools in different regions of the country. Literary texts chosen for the purposes of teaching stylistics were determined keeping the context in mind. While the context was important and the author tried to select texts with theme that would resonate with her students, the author also wanted to challenge them. Therefore, the author chose a selection of poems from canonical English poetry as well as texts from postcolonial settings. The author tried to combine texts from Africa and India, because the question of culture was an important one for the author coming from India. Further, the author also described the form of traditional poetry whenever the author felt it was relevant, for instance, the author explained to the students that a sonnet was a 14-line poem with either an octave or a sestet, or three quatrains and a couplet. While the author admitted that this method of teaching was arbitrary, it worked for her, because the author was using literature to teach stylistics and not stylistics to teach literature. The author wanted her teachers to examine poetry as an artifact and subject it to an analysis which was not tainted by any background knowledge. The idea was to teach them stylistic analysis which could be used for any kind of poetry.

The necessity of teaching stylistics mainly to demystify canonical literature and to make it accessible to teacher was the first step in the pedagogy of stylistics. A clear distinction was made first between literary stylistics and linguistic stylistics. In literary stylistics, standard figures of speech, such as simile, metaphor, personification, imagery, etc., were explained and illustrated using the inductive approach to teaching. Sound devices were also taught, since they were an integral part of poetry and also to highlight the fact that poetry should be read out aloud to derive the greatest pleasure from reading. Once literary stylistics terms were clearly understood, it was necessary to introduce the teachers to linguistic stylistics with concepts such as foregrounding, deviation, parallelism, repetition, theme/rheme, given and new, marked and unmarked and others. Here, the author ensured that for the purposes of illustration, the author used examples from everyday commonplace language. This was mainly to make them aware of the fact that figurative language was part of everyday discourse and not confined to poetry or literature. The author encouraged them to bring their own examples to class, especially examples from their own indigenous languages. What was important for the

author at this point in her teaching was to ascertain whether they understood the concepts of stylistics fully. It was interesting to note that they realized that translation of the figurative and metaphoric language did not succeed in fully conveying meaning in English. This led to a discussion around idioms and the use of idioms to convey indigenous knowledge<sup>4</sup>. Since there were teachers who belonged to different ethnic groups in the class, there was a lively exchange of information regarding the different languages. Further, linguistic analysis at the levels of syntax, lexis, and phonology was taught, illustrated, and practiced in class. With the help of the teachers themselves, an analytical framework was drawn up to identify the stylistic devices and linguistic features and to describe them. The framework is given in Table 1.

Table 1

*Stylistic Analysis Framework*

Literary features	Linguistic features
1. Theme	1. Sound alliteration Consonance Assonance
2. Purpose	
3. Medium	
4. Addresser/Addressee	2. Lexis—mono-/bi-/poly-syllables, collocation set, collocational clash, deviation, denotation/connotation, nominalisation
5. Medium/Mode	3. Syntax—standard, deviation, parallelism colligation, theme/rheme, given/new marked/unmarked
6. Tone	
7. Attitude	

The analysis first examined the literary features of the poems in terms of its theme, the purpose for which it was written, whether it was in the written medium or the spoken medium, who the addresser and addressee were in the poem, and what was the mode, tone, and attitude of the poem. The linguistic features that were examined first looked at the sound effects in terms of alliteration, whether it was the repetition of consonants (consonance) or vowels (assonance). Then the lexis was analyzed to check whether there was over use of mono-, bi-, or poly-syllabic words; whether the words formed a collocation set, or if there were collocational clashes; whether there was lexical or morphological deviation; whether the words used had denotative or connotative effects; and finally, whether there was nominalization in the poems. The syntax was examined for standard use and deviation and colligation, and the sentences were checked for the following use: theme/rheme, given/new, and marked/unmarked.

**Literary Devices**

The literary devices that were identified were: simile, metaphor, personification, irony, apostrophe, metonymy, synecdoche, hyperbole, and litotes.

Once the teachers had clearly understood the various stylistic terms, the next step was to test their understanding as well as their knowledge of stylistics. Whereas for the purposes of explaining the stylistics devices examples were taken from life and from books on stylistics by experts in the field such as Leech and Short's *Reading, Analyzing and Teaching Literature* (1989), Simpson's *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students* (2004), Short's *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose* (1996), Widdowson's *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature* (1975) and *Practical Stylistics* (1992), Verdonk's *Stylistics* (2002), and others,

<sup>4</sup> A research project looking at the role of language in capturing indigenous knowledge and its preservation is already underway at the Polytechnic.



so that the students would have an opportunity to refer to the books in question for clarification of terms and concepts should they need arose; care was taken to ensure that when it came to practice, African poetry was given to the students. Poems by local poets such as Molapong, Thaniseb, and Mvula ya Nangolo were read out in class for an initial response. The author instructed the teachers to write a brief note after getting them to read the poems. They were to write their impressions of the poems without taking into consideration the poetic devices, etc.. The author then requested them to submit their responses to the author to prevent them from glancing at what had been written, as well to correct them. Then we worked through the analysis step by step using the checklist given above. We first identified the literary devices at the micro-linguistic level, next we examined the literary features, and finally we attempted to describe the poem in terms of the various levels of syntax and morphology. Finally, the author would return their written responses and ask them to read whatever they had noted. It was necessary for the author to get them to reflect on their response and also determine how far they diverged from their intuitive response. The author wanted them to make explicit their intuitive response by connecting it to the analysis that they had done. Initially, the students struggled with the linguistic levels, and the author realized it was because they had forgotten their grammar. But they improved after a few classes once the meta-language surfaced from the depths of their memory.

The next step, which was the selection of texts for the purposes of testing, proved to be a challenge. It was at this stage that the author decided upon a set of poems ranging from traditional British poetry such as sonnets by Shakespeare and Keats, poems by Dylan Thomas, two African poems by Wole Soyinka (Nigerian) and Axaro Thaniseb (Namibian), and two Indian poems by Nissim Ezekial. The selection is given below:

- (1) "When to the Sessions of Sweet Silent Thought" (Shakespeare, 1996)
- (2) "After the Rain" (Axaro Thaniseb, 2012)
- (3) "The Night of the Scorpion" (Nissim Ezekiel, 2000)
- (4) "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night" (Dylan Thomas, 1989)
- (5) "Goodbye Party to Ms. Pushpa T. S." (Nissim Ezekiel, 2000)
- (6) "Telephone Conversation" (Wole Soyinka, 2000)
- (7) "When I Have Fears That I May Cease to Be" (Keats, 2003)
- (8) "My Mistress' Eyes Are Nothing Like the Sun" (Shakespeare, 1996)

The poems were selected in terms of the criterion of length: They are all short poems with Ezekiel's "The Night of the Scorpion" being the longest with 48 lines. The author also wanted to give them as wide a range of poems as possible. The author must confess that she chose the poems also because they were her favourite poems and the author had taught them in a different cultural context (India).

These poems were given to the teachers over a period of three months in class. They were required to identify the literary devices and do a stylistic analysis in class in groups of three. The interactive approach was followed to get students to articulate their impressions and intuitive responses to the poems. Subsequently, they were asked pointed questions to draw their attention to literary and linguistic devices. They had to link the linguistic and stylistic devices that they had identified to their intuitive responses to the poems. Discussions led to greater illumination which sparked off further discussions and descriptions. After a few sessions, the students were emboldened to attempt interpretation. Since the classes were block sessions of three hours each, students had plenty of time to ponder, articulate, respond, discuss, and formalize their impressions. After a few classes, they were encouraged to take the next step, which was to interpret and evaluate. At the end of the unit on poetry, the students were given a questionnaire (see Appendix) which had been administered to another group of the

previous year to test for validity and reliability and to ensure that the questions were aimed at fulfilling the objectives of the research, in order to evaluate the success of both the pedagogy of stylistics, as well as the literature that was given for analysis.

### Findings

The followings are findings from this study. Of the poems that were prescribed, all students stated that they found the sonnets by Shakespeare and Keats most difficult to understand. Three of the reasons that most of them listed for finding the poems difficult were: (1) The language is obscure; (2) The imagery and concept are difficult to understand; and (3) The poem belongs to a culture. While the students could identify the sonnet form and the rhyme scheme, the theme proved to be difficult for the students to identify. The third question pertained to concepts of stylistics that they have understood. Most students listed the followings: foregrounding deviation, parallelism, collocational sets, and theme/rheme. To the fourth question: "Explain how the knowledge of the concept of stylistics mentioned above has helped you to understand/analyze/evaluate poetry", the responses were very positive. Some of the responses are given below:

They enable me to look at certain features in a poem that stand out and to use them to tease out the theme and purpose of the poem.

The concepts like literary stylistics and linguistics features in poetry have helped me to grasp poetic elements. They have helped me to appreciate and enjoy poetry and not just regard it as a piece of writing.

I realize that poetry is read for pleasure and enjoyment also. If properly studied, poetry is precious. (personal communication, September 12, 2010)

To the fifth question: "Do you believe stylistics has helped you to overcome challenges created due to culture? Please explain", the responses were resoundingly in favor of stylistics. All the students stated that stylistics enabled them to understand, analyze, interpret, and enjoy poetry. To the question: "What shortcoming do you find in stylistics as a subject?", most students felt that if they had had more time, the course itself would have been better. A couple of students felt that stylistics did not provide the means to analyze longer texts. However, it must be noted that at the point when the questionnaire was administered to them, they had not been taught stylistic analysis of the prose form or drama. To the seventh question: "In what ways will you use your knowledge of stylistics to teach poetry to your students?", most students claimed that the insights gained from stylistic analysis of poem would empower them to teach poetry. To the eighth question: "Do you think poetry should be prescribed at schools? What are the benefits of studying poetry?", most teachers expressed that they had overcome their initial reluctance to study and teach poetry. Some of the responses were as follows:

Yes, poetry is pleasure and will expand enthusiasm for reading and improve imagination.

Yes, it enhances the cognitive skills of learners.

Yes, benefits are appreciation of literature and looking at life from another perspective. As well as enjoying playing with words. (personal communication, September 12, 2010)

The teachers agreed that the study of poetry would greatly benefit their students who would develop a love for literature and reading thereby, and improve their vocabulary and writing. To the ninth question: "Do you believe that literature should be introduced in schools?", all teachers strongly affirmed and recommended that literature teaching should start in primary school itself. To the last question: "In what ways does the study of literature help students?", most teachers stated that it improves reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.

Further, they added that literature also promoted creativity.

The usefulness of stylistics, a teaching tool, came to the fore at the end of the semester when the teacher had to develop lesson plans using stylistic to teach poetry. Pedagogical stylistics was found to be a useful topic for study. They used the concepts they had studied in stylistics to formulate questions that could direct their students' responses to poetry. They had overcome their fear of poetry in particular and literature in general. Further, they were interested in reading poetry for pleasure and brought several poems to class to share with their classmates that they chanced upon in news papers, magazines, and books.

### Conclusions

In a country like Namibia which for 20 years has not advocated the study of literature, the use of stylistics is paramount. Even though the course itself was only a one semester course, its applicability to other areas of English language teaching especially in a third world context was remarkable. The students of this program also work as subject specialists and circuit inspectors in the NIED (National Institute of Educational Development) and the Ministry of Education. Since Namibia is such a small country that the students (teachers) of the Polytechnic can influence the government and these teachers can impact policy decisions and change the curriculum in ways that will benefit the nation. Hopefully, through these efforts, more teachers will gain the confidence to teach literature in schools thereby engendering a culture of reading in the country and creative writing in the country.

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**Appendix: Questionnaire**

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this research project. All information that you provide will be treated as confidential and used for research purposes only.

Pl. tick in the boxes given below:

1. Which poem did you find most difficult to understand from the ones given below ?

- (1) When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
- (2) The rain
- (3) The night of the scorpion
- (4) Do not go gentle into that good night
- (5) Goodbye party to Ms. Pushpa T.S.
- (6) Telephone conversation
- (7) When I have fears that I may cease to be
- (8) My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun


2. What are some of the reasons that you found the poems given for analysis difficult?

- (1) Language is obscure
- (2) The imagery and concept are difficult to understand
- (3) You have not studied poetry
- (4) You have not taught poetry
- (5) The poem belongs to a culture which you do not understand
- (6) Any other reason .....


3. List some of the concepts of Stylistics that know and understand very well. (Add as many as you please)

- a. ....
- b. ....
- c. ....
- d. ....

4. Explain how the knowledge of the concepts of Stylistics mentioned above have helped you to understand/analyse/evaluate poetry. Pl. give examples.

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5. Do you believe Stylistics has helped you to overcome challenges created due to culture? Pl. explain.

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6. What shortcomings (if any) do you find in Stylistics as a subject?

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7. In what ways will you use your knowledge of Stylistics to teach poetry to your students?

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8. Do you think poetry should be prescribed at schools ? What are the benefits of studying poetry?

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9. Do you believe that Literature should be introduced in schools ? At what level?

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10. According to you, in what ways does the study of literature help students?

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(Dr. Sarala Krishnamurthy/Stylistics/questionnaire/2010)