



Psycholinguistic Analysis of Coleridge's - Rime of the Ancient Mariner

KEYWORDS

psycholinguistics, rime, Coleridge

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ABSTRACT *Man is bestowed with the highest gift of reasoning and language is the crowning glory of human race, because it is the expression of the enigma of man's being and his relation to the Universe. Language is the important tool of communication to express one's own ideas, views and feelings. Language is used not only as the vehicle of communication, but also as the vehicle to understand the mood/mindset of the people. For example, people in love uses poetic language; people in angry mood uses short sentences. The encoding and decoding of messages are the outcome of the functions of the brain at the neurobiological level and the functions of mind at the psychological level. The aim of the study, here, is to analyze the psychological conditions/mindset/mood of the characters through the language used by them.*

Cognitive Psychology And Psycholinguistics

Cognitive psychology is the branch of psychology dealing with the cognitive system, which constitutes the mental processes that are involved in knowing about the external world and their impact on our perceptions, attention, thinking and memory.

The culmination of the branches of cognitive psychology and linguistics led to the formation of psycholinguistics which deals with the mental processes, its underlying relation with language comprehension, production and acquisition.

"Psycholinguistics is the study of the mental mechanism that makes it possible for people to use language. It is a scientific discipline whose goal is a coherent theory of the way in which language is produced and understood".

(Garnham, 1985: 1)

Psycholinguistic Analysis Of The Character Of The Ancient Mariner

The opening words of the wedding -guest indicated the superior will power of the Ancient Mariner. The wedding guest is held by the eyes of the Mariner and is made to listen to his tale. He makes an attempt to break away and cries-

"Hold off! Unhand me grey-beard loon"

But the Mariner holds him in thrall-

"He holds him with the glittering eye- The wedding-guest stood still And listens like a three year child: The Mariner hath his will.

The wedding -guest sat on a stone:

He cannot choose but hear;"[11-18]

In the beginning of the poem, the Mariner is in a merry mood. The way he starts his tale suggests that he is in a happy state of mind. The Mariner and the guest are then disturbed by the loud beating of the drums. Mariner in a disturbed mood unnecessarily describes the southward journey through the tropics.

"And now the storm-blast came, and he Was tyrannous and strong: He struck with his o'ertaking wings, And chased us south along." [41-44]

Then the mood of the Mariner moves from a disturbed state to the fright/fear. The Mariner feared because he reached

the land of ice, where he heard fearful sounds and no living being is found. The frightful nature/mood is brought out through the use of repetition and assonance.

"The ice was here, the ice was there, The ice was all around: It cracked and growled, and roared and Howled, Like noise in a swound ..." [59-63]

Then he attained relaxation because he sees the albatross "bird of good omen".

"At length did cross an albatross' Through the fog it came; As if it had been a Christian soul, We hailed it in God's name. " [64-67]

Then the Mariner experiences pain which is shown through his facial expressions. This mood of pain is understood through the words of the Wedding-guest on the Mariner's face.

"God save thee, Ancient Mariner! From the fiends, that plagues thee thus! Why look'st thou so?" [79-81].

Then the feeling of guilt prevails in him, which is identified by the following lines spoken by the Mariner:

"And I had done a hellish thing, And it would work'em woe: For all averred, I had killed the bird That made the breeze to blow." [91-94]

The Mariner's guilty feeling reached its height when the shipmates throat parched, not even a single drop of water to drink though they were in the midst of a sea. He felt the effectiveness of the crime when the dead Albatross was hung around his neck.

"Water, water, everywhere, Nor any drop to drink." [121-122] "Instead of the cross, the Albatross About my neck was hung." [141-142]

In that helpless situation, the Mariner bit his own arms, sucked his own blood to wet his parched throats. A sudden happiness sprung in him when he saw a sail approaching them. This is shown by his repetition of words:

"I bit my arm, I sucked the blood, And cried a sail! a sail!" [160-161]

The happiness as it came; it went in a second when the Mariner saw the skeleton ship approaching them. His heart began to beat violently and his eyes filled with horror when he

looked at the ribs of the ship, which seemed to be like the bars of a prison.

"Alas! (Thought I, and my heart beat loud), How fast she nears and nears! Are those her sails that glance in the sun, Like restless gossamers?" [181-184]

The horrifying mood is then replaced by an utmost fear, when he realized the sudden disappearance of the specter ship. The fearful mood of the Mariner is understood by the words which he uttered.

"With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea, Off shot the specter-bark. We listened and looked sideways up! Fear at my heart, as at a cup, My life-blood seemed to sip!" [201-205]

The Mariner was the only living soul in his ship. He was alone. There was no one on the ship, or on the sea to take pity on him. He is in a helpless condition. Now the Mariner was overcome by a feeling of utter desolation.

"Alone, alone, all, all alone, Alone on a wide wide sea! And never a saint took pity on My soul in agony" [232-235]

One with a guilty heart would not be able to pray. Here the Mariner with his sinful heart was unable even to pray. This makes him even sadder.

"I looked to heaven, and tried to pray; But or ever a prayer had ghust, A wicked whisper came, and made My heart as dry as dust" [244-247]

At last his fear, horror, solitude everything results in 'death-wish'. In that lonely sea, with his crew's dead body he doesn't want to live. He wishes to die. This is understood from his words.

"As orphans curse would drag to hell A spirit from on high But oh! More horrible than that Is the curse in a dead man's eye! Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse, And yet I could not die." [257-262]

Till this point, the Mariner saw only the ugly living creatures. Now he saw some beautiful water snakes. The more appearance of these shiny water snakes arouses some kind of tender feelings in his frustrated heart. With this sudden mood of tenderness he unconsciously blessed the water-snakes, which paved the way for him to pray.

"O happy living things! No tongue Their beauty might declare A spring of love gushed from my heart And I blessed them unaware: Sure my kind saint took pity on me, And I blessed them unaware The self-same moment I could pray And from my neck so free The Albatross fell off and sank Like lead into the sea" [282-291]

When we have done some sinful act, we feel guilty which won't allow us to sleep. But when we regret our act, when we are relieved from the sin, we feel comfort and soothe.

In the same way, the Mariner's mind which was restless once, now with the blessings, the Mariner comforts his mind and body through the gentle sleep. After a long struggle, the Mariner is blessed with sleep. A sense of realization gushes out from the heart of the Mariner.

"Oh! Sleep! It is a gentle thing, Beloved from pole to pole! To Mary queen the praise be given! She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven, That slid into my soul." [292-296]

In the end of this poem, the Mariner finds relief after reaching his own land. He exclaims with joy and relief that he stands on a firm land and not on a sea.

"And now, all in my own country I stood on the firm land!"

The final words that are valedictory words uttered by the Mariner reveals as the fact that he has identified his own "inner-self" (self-realization) and the world moral that:

"He prayeth well, who loveth well, Both man and bird and beast He prayeth best who loveth best All things both great and small; For the dear God who loveth us, He made and loveth all." [612-617]

Findings Of The Study

This study helps us to find out how Coleridge has presented the characters. The findings of the study are as follows:

- The ancient mariner was presented as a dominant character; while the wedding-guest, a submissive character.
- Though the events taking place were supernatural, the feelings of the ancient mariner were as that of an ordinary human being.
- Through the use of repetition, the mariner proved himself as a good story-teller.
- The wedding-guest was created by Coleridge as a good listener. He was there to create a dramatic effect.

Conclusion

Thus through the words used by the characters it is possible to predict the mental thoughts or the mood of that particular character. Here, the changing of the moods of both the Mariner and the wedding guest is understood through the words used by them.