

H. SEZGI SARAC DURGUN  
Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey  
ORCID: 0000-0002-6261-6527

## **From Syntax to Stylistics: A Case Study of Selected Haikus**

### **Abstract:**

A writer's style reflects how textual meaning-making processes are achieved through a literary text's form, which includes various textual strategies employed. Available literature suggests that almost every linguistic theory takes the sentence structure as a combination of 'form' and 'content', whose taxonomic amplifications provide a springboard for description that leads to a more comprehensive extension of linguistic analyses revealing the semantic and symbolic aspects of language making up a text. Hence, although textual analysis may start by identifying its form and content, a comprehensive approach that engulfs a text's syntactic and semantic aspects provides a broader perspective. Keeping these in mind, this study is based on the premise that structural analysis enables the identification of the poet's recurrent method of composing different literary texts of the same genre and guides analysts to semantic interpretations. Examining the poetic language of a selection of haikus written by Wright, with a focus on the syntactic and semantic identifications, it is observed that the poet has an uncompromising style toward utilizing a pattern with minor alterations to construct various poems. The poet achieves an effective diction using a restricted number of lexical and grammatical items, which fits into the terseness of haikus, a poetic form known for its brevity and conciseness.

**Keywords:** syntax, pedagogy, stylistics, poetry, haiku, literature, linguistics

### **Introduction**

Among the available means in a language, a writer favours some structures over the others while constructing a text (Traugott & Pratt 1980). Hence, a writer's style reflects how textual meaning-making processes are achieved through a literary text's form, which includes various textual strategies employed. Examining a text's structural patterns is the initial and indispensable part of any interpretative process (Blake 1990; Suzuki 2001) in any stylistic inquiry. Mainly because a writer's subtle intentions can be sensed

in the linguistic devices constructing the text, their structural and lexical choices, in essence, represent their style in text composition. Therefore, examining the deep structure of the text along with a careful analysis of the surface structure is primarily crucial in defining and discussing the making of a text-based discourse (Erden 1998). As Korkut (2003) emphasizes, unearthing the hidden relationship between the style and the signified plays a crucial role in identifying contextual meaning constructed on the intersection of the signifiers and their probable meanings. When the deviant nature of language use in poetry is considered, it can be seen that such an in-depth analysis requires a systematic investigation into regularity and pattern (Parkinson, Thomas 2000). In a nutshell, the interdependence of all syntactical and semantic constructions that make up a text is first and foremost realized through a writer's poetic language use, and thus, examination of syntax is the primary activity directed towards shedding light on various discursive and thus semantic formulations that set literary and daily language apart. This kind of understanding necessitates a holistic view of the components of a text, including an emphasis on the functions as well as the forms of all the parts in a text. As put forward by Bloomfield (1933), "We could not understand the form of a language if we merely reduced all the complex forms to their ultimate constituents" (Bloomfield 1933: 161). However, even if one looks at a text holistically, identifying textual meaning must prioritize recognizing the constituents of phrases and chunks. According to Fowler (1989), almost every linguistic theory takes the sentence structure as a combination of 'form' and 'content,' albeit as two different types of structures. Accordingly, while "surface structure is the observable, or the expressive, layer of the sentence," its "deep structure is the abstract content of" it. Hence, "We experience surface structure directly, but retrieve deep structure, or meaning, only by a complex act of decoding" (Fowler 1989: 6).

Such an inquiry of structure and, subsequently, meaning contributes to an intense exploration of all aspects of poetic language. Transformational-generative grammar stipulated a method of investigation for poetic syntactic structure with far more sensitivity to intricacies than had ever been possible in literary criticism (Fowler, 1981). Just as exploring a literary text via linguistic stylistics is a firm approach to a text, as denoted by Baker (1968), it is a significant contribution of a linguist to observe a specific language use descriptively and in detail, after which the comparison of them with other language issues would reveal more concrete results. Besides, a linguist approaches a text from the perspective of "neutral grammar," nevertheless, for a literary critic, "the product of research is a hierarchy of concrete verbal structures which does not automatically produce new structures and cannot even claim to justify beyond question its own configuration (Baker 1968: 2). Nash (2005) indicates that analyzing a text via metalanguage by dispersing it to its components postulates two remunerations, one of which "is that it may actually confirm, with additional emphasis and a sharpening of focus, the findings of common sense; the other is that it may prove to be heuristic, providing us with some way of perceiving what our distracted attentions have initially overlooked" (Nash 2005: 33).

Linguists alone do not tackle issues brought forward by textual critics. Watson and Ducharme (1990) point out that the psychoanalysts also espouse the value of structural analysis. Lacan, for example, is regarded as a structuralist who asserts the central role and significance of language by paying close attention to the discourse of the interlocutor since "the structure of language is, as before, the key to the structure of mind" (Ducharme 1990: 404–405). The recurrent structural preferences committed by the poet might function as the signifier of how his cognition processes while performing his art. Such analyses of repeated syntactic patterns hint at the poet's conscious and non-conscious reflection of cognition and perception. Buffon's aphorism declares this intertwining nature between the performance and the poet's

mind: 'style is the man himself' (fr. 'le style est l'homme même'). The recurrent structures lead us to the poet's style and his mind.

An amalgam of different approaches to a literary text leads us to a more comprehensive delineation. Taxonomic amplifications provide a springboard for description that leads to a more comprehensive extension of linguistic analyses in a way to reveal the semantic and symbolic aspects of language making up a text. Goldberg (1995) indicates that because grammatical constructions are the basic building blocks of language, linguistic analysis has the potential to display a language composed of forms with semantic or discourse functions. As individual linguists such as Croft (2001) highlight that a grammatical construction is a symbolic unit embodying form and conventional meaning, enabling general rules to have semantic interpretations, the cognitivist stance emphasizes the notion that grammar is an "inventory of symbolic units," not a scheme of rules or regulations (Evans, Green 2006: 481). Hence, although textual analysis may start by identifying its constituents, a comprehensive approach that engulfs a text's syntactic and semantic aspects provides a broader perspective.

Grammar is known as the combination of syntax and semantics, which in poetic language refers to patterns of representation. The "representation of the poem depends on the pattern. If the pattern changes, the representation changes. The grammatical categories of tense and aspect are realigned to provoke the reading of poetry as representation" (Cubukcu 2001: 86). Hence, parallel to the aforementioned methodological discussion, this study examines poetic language in terms of its syntactic and semantic relations to identify the patterns that emancipate textual interpretation. The study is based on the premise that structural analysis enables the identification of the poet's recurrent method of composing different literary texts of the same genre and guides analysts to semantic interpretations. Similarly, the study presents a template for language teachers and learners with which they can get a grasp of the poet's style. The study further provides guidelines for instruction in a fashion elsewhere called; pedagogical stylistics.

## Methodology

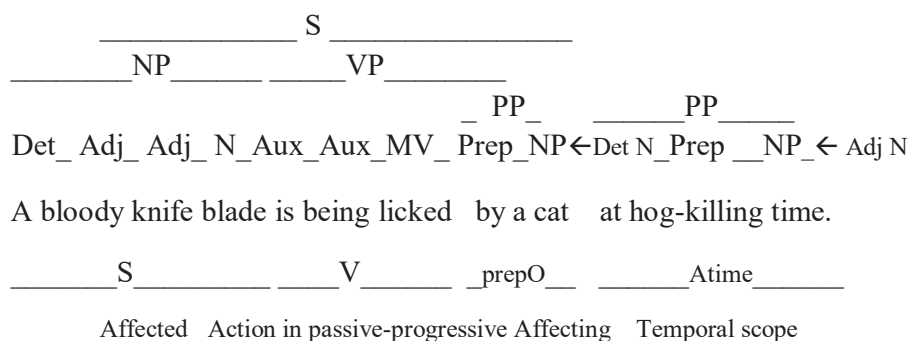
The methodology selected for the present study was the stylistic analysis of the poems via phrase structure identification. While revealing the structure, the syntactic relations among elements were clarified through structure identifications. As put forward by Crystal (1987), in a syntactic diagram, the sentence is segmented by naming and labeling each element that comes out in the order of presentation, and this is "a good way of putting more information into an analysis" (Crystal 1987: 96). Besides, the stylistic analysis provides a replicable research methodology. Via stylistic analysis, the procedures are accessible and transparent enough to enable other stylisticians to verify them on the same or different texts (Simpson 2004). Thus, this study aims to concretize how structural organizations lead readers and analysts to have identifications of style.

Purposeful sampling was employed for the selection of the material to analyze. The research scope was narrowed down to haikus for feasibility purposes. While deciding on the type of poem, it was taken into consideration that syntactic analysis of haikus would be rather apparent and comprehensible as haiku is defined as "poetry marked by brevity" (Missias 2001). In another definition, Swede (2000: 33) notes that "brevity--about a breath-length long" is the primary feature defining haikus, which may expedite a stylistic model construction with ease. Since it was not possible to analyze all the poems written in haiku as a form, the poems written by Wright ([1998] 2011) were included in the analysis because such



The poem above follows a regular sentence structure with the constituents of a noun (N) and a VP. The passive voice via a VP composed of copula and a verb (V) comes after the non-human and inanimate phrase in the subjective position, and the main verb phrase (MVP) structure ends with two different prepositional phrases. A linear structuring of the poem is observed in which, due to the intact structure of the subject and the predicate, no ellipsis or inversion is detected. The regular use of PPs strengthens the redundancy observed in the sentence pattern. The expansion of the NPs is achieved via adjectives (Adj,s) that enable further description for the base nouns. The same structure is exhibited in the following poem as well:

A bloody knife blade  
Is being licked by a cat  
At hog-killing time. (30)



### Diagram 2

The sequencing of the linguistic items in the first and the second poems is almost equal. The passive voice structure with the copula, the non-human and inanimate actant, and the repetitive prepositional phrases are similarly constructed in both poems. Moreover, neither of the poems violates the usual word order of Subject S-V-O.

The poet also prefers a similar pattern of the same structural model as seen in the poem below. The run-on-line verse initiates with an NP referring to an inanimate entity as in the previous poems. The sequencing of constituents follows the same convention with the modification of including conjunction, and the selected voice is active this time:

The summer moonlight  
Gleams upon a blacksmith's forge,  
And cools red embers. (179)

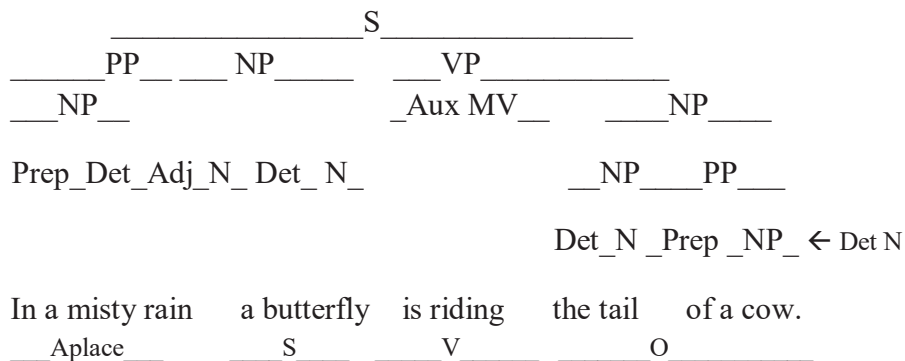


### Diagram 4

In the four poems above, since the doers of the actions are not human beings, the imagery is constructed through non-human entities. While the poems are written from the observer's viewpoint, they discretely highlight life around humans in which objects and happenings appear as centralizing and primary beings. Such perception underscores that a non-human life cycle deserves narration mainly because it is alive with its actants and predicates.

In the poems given below, the syntactic sequence initiates with a prepositional phrase and is followed by the regular sentence structure of subject-verb-object progression. Therefore, it can be stated that the PP functions as a complementizer to the main clause:

In a misty rain  
A butterfly is riding  
The tail of a cow. (18)

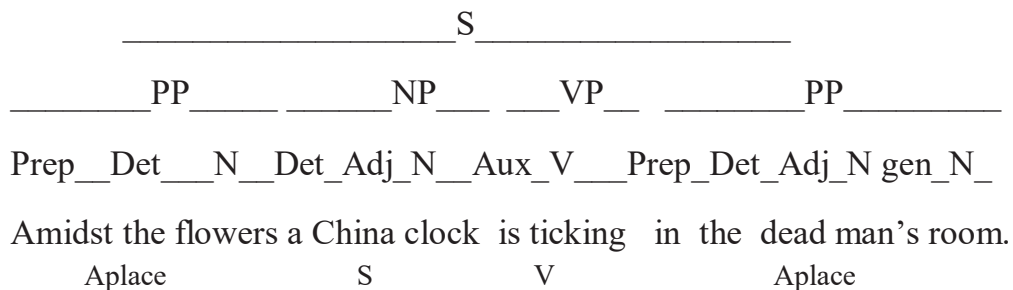


### Diagram 5

In the poem above, the initial phrase structure opens up the scene by identifying the setting for the reader. Just as in the first category of poems, the initial phrase includes an adjectival, which enriches the imagery presented in the opening line. The features of the previously analyzed group of poems are also observed in the main clause. The actant, the 'butterfly,' is again a non-human entity. It is personified via the selected VP, 'riding.' As in the other poems, the narrative style informs the reader about the life experienced around us and without us.

The following poem illustrates the same structural design, which leads to a PP followed by the main clause. In this main clause, the aspect selection is also identical to the previous poem as the continuous aspect is preferred. The setting introduced through the PP enables us to view it among the flowers. Even though the image of flowers awakens positive feelings, the main clause clarifies where the narrator is: 'in the dead man's room.' Both adverbials are syntactically optional, but their placement here creates a 'zooming-in' construal. Besides, contrary to the aforementioned poems starting with NPs, readers encounter a human in this poem, but this human is dead. Therefore, the focus shifts to non-human existence:

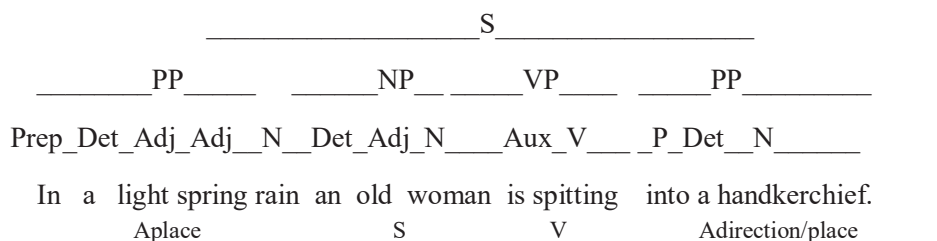
Amidst the flowers  
A China clock is ticking  
In the dead man's room. (144)



### Diagram 6

The following poem possesses comparable characteristics of the superstructure to the previous two poems. The PP, 'In a light spring rain,' is placed in the first line of the poem. Thus, the first images of the setting are output via the same structure. This poem has an identical structure to the preceding poems, and it is the first time that the reader comes across a (+) human actant. As a shared feature observed in structuring, the phrases in this poem are composed of adjectives: 'light,' 'spring,' and 'old.' The phrase in the opening line includes adjectives with positive connotations similar to the previous poem. However, in this specific poem, the atmosphere created by such a phrase structure is abolished with the main clause succeeding:

In a light spring rain  
An old woman is spitting  
Into a handkerchief. (407)

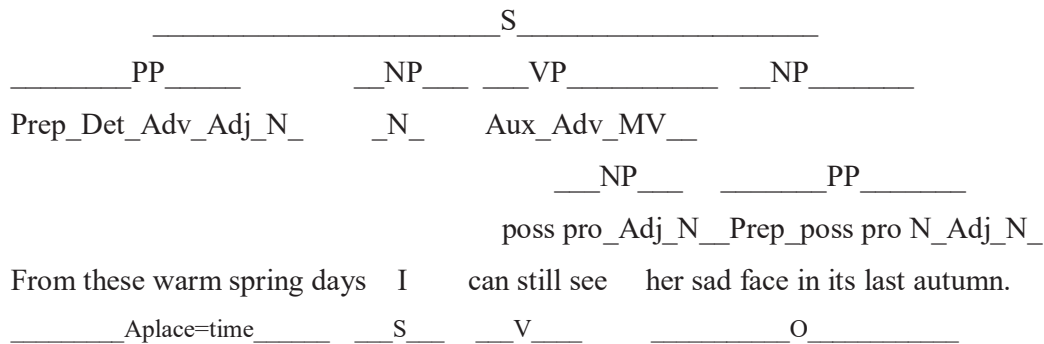




**Diagram 7**

As can be seen in the poem below, repetition is an important stylistic device the poet uses. The PP, ‘From these warm spring days,’ includes an NP with an adjective phrase. This opening line creates a positive introduction in terms of connotations. Nevertheless, as spotted in some of the previous poems, the resvt is depicted by the main clause that alters the mood to an adverse one:

From these warm spring days,  
I can still see her sad face  
In its last autumn. (186)

**Diagram 8**

Owing to the inverted syntax in the poems initiating with a complimentary phrase, the focal point of a narrative is displaced for emphasis. It is observed that the narration starts with a different scene and is followed by the customary sequence of structures. The identification of frequently preferred structure regulations employed by Wright enables categorizing his poems in terms of his syntactic choices. Wright chooses various structural patterns, but once he retains a pattern, he produces different poems with slightly varied versions of such patterns. Brink (2014) points out the same finding on Wright’s style in terms of his construction of imagery: “it seems Wright would take an image and repeat it, test it in various combinations and settings, developing correspondences between the uses of the same word or image over many haiku” (Brink 2014: 1084). Therefore, it can be stated that the poet’s style displays constancy in syntax and imagery. The identification of frequently preferred structure regulations employed by Wright enables categorizing his poems in terms of his syntactic choices.

Knowledge of syntax and also stylistics enables language learners to enhance their comprehension of “how language, grammar and rhetoric function in texts” so that they analyze the texts with these tools, and eventually, such applications lead them to a further stage, which is producing literary texts (Burke 2010: 7). Targeting the instruction of style with such a purpose, Carter (2010) indicates that “there is no single ‘correct’ way of analyzing and interpreting the text, nor any single correct pedagogic approach” (Carter 2010: 116). Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2014) state that such an application of phrase structure recognition enables language learners to raise awareness of identifying the linear order of words

in sentences, syntactic categories of words, and their hierarchical organizations. Thus, it can be deduced that identifying syntactic patterns may function as a part of a larger spectrum of instructional approaches to poetry analysis.

### Conclusion

The findings substantiate that the poet employs two characteristic syntactic patterns. To attain this finding, the poet's preference for structural patterns within a corpus of poems is examined through structural analysis. Regarding the style used by Wright, two distinctive structures have been identified: one set of poems initiating with an NP and continuing with a VP, and the other placing PP as the first component, followed by S. The phrases that compose the poems are bolted together in a flawless technique in terms of grammatical organization. In Wright's representation, it is observed that he has an uncompromising style toward utilizing a pattern with minor alterations. The superstructure in his poetry is composed of well-formed sentences and is built around the framework of the seventeen-syllable Japanese haiku poem. Therefore, the poet achieves a narrative diction even though he has a restricted number of lexical and grammatical items to use.

Therefore, it can be stated that identifying language constructions in the preliminary stage of literary text analysis has the potential to contribute to pedagogical stylistics. It allows the development of a corpus for learners to benefit while producing their literary texts. Hence, in addition to the expected outcomes of the instruction on style concerning syntactic regulations, the style instruction in the creative writing of literary texts is another contribution that moves the linguistic analysis from literary analysis to pedagogical stylistics. Such analyses of phrase structures may straightforwardly provide templates for learners of literature and creative writing so that model styles can guide them. Initiating with such a stylistically aware approach to writing, the learners, as the prospective analysts and poets, may develop confidence in creating their style.

### References

- Baker, William (1968) "Literary Criticism and Linguistics." [In:] *Style*. Volume 2 (1); 1–5.
- Blake, Norman F. (1990) *An Introduction to the Language of Literature*. New York: Palgrave.
- Bloomfield, Leonard (1933) *Language*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Brink, Dean A. (2014) "Richard Wright's Search for a Counter-Hegemonic Genre: The Anamorphic and Matrixial Potential of Haiku." [In:] *Textual Practice*. Volume 28 (6); 1077–1102.
- Burke, Michael (2010) "Why Care About Pedagogical Stylistics? Preface." [In:] *Language and Literature*. Volume 19 (1); 7–11.
- Carter, Ronald (2010) "Issues in Pedagogical Stylistics: A Coda." [In:] *Language and Literature: International Journal of Stylistics*. Volume 19 (1); 115–122.
- Chomsky, Noam ([1957] 2002) *Syntactic Structures*. New York: Mouton & Co.
- Croft, William (2001) *Radical Construction Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Crystal, David (1987) *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Cubukcu, Feryal (2001) "Use of Poetry for EFL Purposes." [In:] *Buca Faculty of Education Journal*. Volume 3; 85–92.
- Erden, Aysu (1998) *Kısa Oyku ve Dilbilimsel Elestiri (Short Story and Linguistic Criticism)*. Ankara: Gundogan.
- Evans, Vyvyan, Melanie Green (2006) *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Fowler, Roger (1981) *Literature as Social Discourse*. London: Batsford.
- Fowler, Roger (ed.) (1989) *Linguistics and the Novel*. London: Routledge.
- Fromkin, Victoria, Robert Rodman, Nina Hyams ([2007] 2014) *An Introduction to Language*. Boston: Wadsworth.
- Goldberg, Adele (1995) *Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Korkut, Ece (2003) "Dilbilimsel Şiir Çözümlemeleri (Linguistic Analyses of Poetry)." [In:] Ayşe Kıran, Ece Korkut and Suna Ağıldere (eds.) *Günümüz Dilbilim Çalışmaları (Contemporary Linguistic Studies)*. Istanbul: Multilingual; 133–142.
- Lucas, Frank L. (1955) *Style*. London: Cassel and Coy.
- McIntyre, Dan (2011) "The Place of Stylistics in the English Curriculum." [In:] Lesley Jeffries and Dan McIntyre (eds.) *Teaching Stylistics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; 9–29.
- Missias, Andrea C. (2001) "Struggling for Definition." [In:] *Frogpond: The Journal of the Haiku Society of America*. Volume 24 (3); 53–63.
- Nash, Walter (2005) "Changing the Guard at Elsinore." [In:] Ronald Carter and Paul Simpson (eds.) *Language, Discourse and Literature: An Introductory Reader in Discourse Stylistics*. London: Routledge.
- Ogburn, Floyd (1998) "Richard Wright's Unpublished Haiku: A World Elsewhere." [In:] *MELUS*, 23 (3), 57–81. doi:10.2307/467678 [date of access: 18.02.2020].
- Parkinson, Brian, Helen Reid Thomas (2000) *Teaching Literature in a Second Language*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Simpson, Paul (2004) *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*. London: Routledge.
- Suzuki, Rie (2001) "A Stylistic Analysis and Interpretation of Thomas Hardy's »The Going«." Paper presented at the 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Thomas Hardy Society of Japan, Chuo University, Tokyo. [At:] [https://www.ubunkyo.ac.jp/center/library/image/fsell2004\\_149-158.pdf](https://www.ubunkyo.ac.jp/center/library/image/fsell2004_149-158.pdf) [date of access: 10.12.2019].
- Swede, George (2000) "Towards a Definition of the English Haiku." [In:] George Swede, Randy Brooks (eds.) *Global Haiku: Twenty-Five Poets World-Wide*. Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press.
- Traugott, Elizabeth Closs, Mary Louise Pratt (1980) *Linguistics for Students of Literature*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Watson, Edward A., Edward Wilfred Ducharme (1990) *Literary Criticism: Ten Approaches, An Introductory Reader*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Winterowd, Ross W. (1983) "Prolegomenon to Pedagogical Stylistics" [In:] *College Composition and Communication*. Volume 34 (1); 80–90.
- Wright, Richard ([1998] 2011) *Haiku: The Last Poetry by Richard Wright*. New York: Arcade Publishing.

