



**COMICS AS A GENRE OF MIGRATED LANGUAGE WITH REFERENCE TO
CALVIN AND HOBBS BY BILL WATTERSON**

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Abstract:

Comics gained popularity as a genre around the world in the late twentieth century. A genre must be socially accepted. When the world develops in a massive pace, new connections are created. The birth of Popular Literature is one such occasion. People started to adhere to eccentric genres. The normality of genres was broken. Literally, readers have no or little time to spend on reading books. Comics entered at the right time to suit the changes. Visual pleasure alongside Humor motivated its growth. Peculiar words gained importance. Slangs and Dialects occupied space. An easily understandable genre can definitely reach horizons. The subject of study chosen is Calvin and Hobbes by Bill Watterson. The adjustments made in language to suit the growing trends are casual. A major concern considered by all can be shockingly given in a compact space in Comics. This yields the arrival of Minimalism which holds the motto of “Less is More”. It is high tradition to elaborate on a particular thought. But the Minimalist aspect of Comics encourages a migration in the belief that “More is More”. The license in language to be arbitrary enthruses new genres to impart recency. This paper will focus on the migration and adjustments of language in Comics with the aid of Calvin and Hobbes by Bill Watterson.

Key Words: Minimalism, Migration, Genre, Comics, Variations.

Comics developed as a non-standard literary genre. Comics use a visual language through which the perception of the concept is far better. The language of Comics is generally associated with the use of speech balloons, thought balloons, narrative boxes and sound effects. Although Comics is visually effective, it involves a cognitive approach. The aesthetics of Comics lies in proper sequencing of comic strips. Language is generally a learned, complex system. Language in Comics is a departure from normal regulations in discourses. Comics include multiple meanings in it through which the intention of the comic strip is studied. Comics is a language of direct social interaction without any barriers of knowledge. A common mode of language is restricted through framed rules of usage. Comics is free to express both a serious message as well as an implied humor.

Calvin and Hobbes, a comic strip series which appeared from 1985 till 1995 employs a language distinctive to Comics. Comics uses spoken dialects as its language. Calvin and Hobbes too sticks to a slang language particular to Americans. Many of the expressions used to denote actions are influenced by everyday speech sounds. The migration is from a regular convention of linguistics to a common form of expression as in Comics. Urban Slangs are peculiar in spelling and meaning that relates itself to a particular culture. The incorporations of different accents and metaphors are attributes of Comics. The language of comics demands variations according to communicative needs of the strips.

The language of Comics is certainly simple and recognizable while it is highly challenging to create it. Euphemisms can also be noted through creation of Comics. The willingness of the comic artist to blend different literary practices comes alive in a genre like Comics. Bill Watterson is a definite trendsetter in elevating the style of Comics. Calvin and Hobbes is a milestone in the genre of Comics, especially in the use of Slang language.

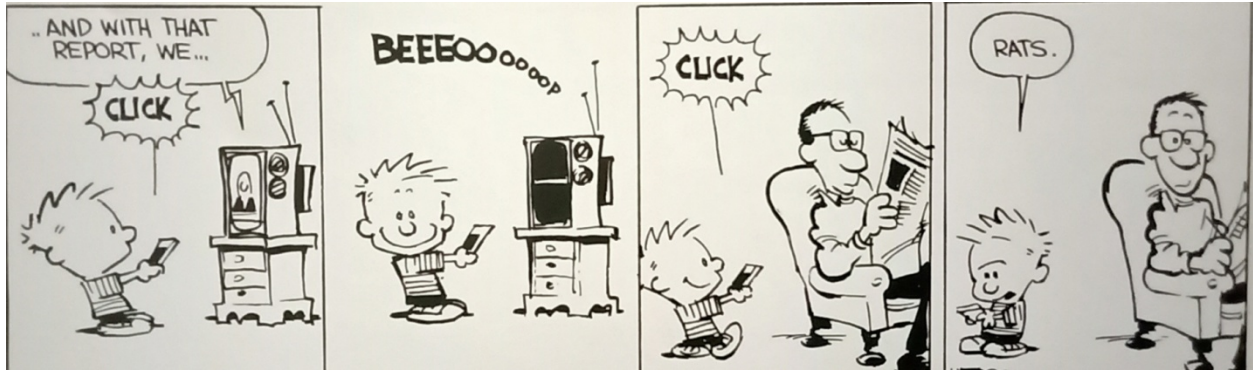
If you have any lingering doubt that the funnies serve as grammar, speller, and style book of the vulgate, listen to a few street-corner conversations or ask a school teacher or two about the language problems with which she has most frequently to deal. You will be convinced, I am sure, that if the English of the comic cartoons does not direct the speech habits of the common

people, it at least crystallizes and gives currency to popular tendencies, thereby playing a material part in the Americanization of the English language. (Tysell 1935:54)



Bill Watterson introduces a new word, “Wormucking” for a touch of humor. Calvin, a small boy enjoys moving in rain. In order to amplify the playful nature of the young one, Watterson coins this new word. The placement of the word in the comic strip suits the theme it tries to convey. A language play is witnessed through Minimalism. Language in Calvin and Hobbes always enjoys exclamations and enquiries. Comic artists are always challenged in producing the desired fun in the restricted space. One syllable words are more often dominating the comic panels. Three syllable words are rarely found.

Words are usually conjoined to allow the minimalist effect. “Let us go!” is given as “Let’s go!”. “What is that?” is disposed as “What’s that?”. Children are generally lured towards the colored sketches along with the expressions of action. A child having limited or no knowledge in English too can identify and correlate the comic strips through not the standard language but through the non-standard lexicons. In Comics, structures of the panels are prioritized than the content. Phonology, Syntax and Morphology are the formal properties of Comics.



Calvin and Hobbes contains four panels in one comic strip. The final strip is usually laughter- evoking. All the four panels carry an expression and not an explanation. The intention of Calvin doesn't need furthermore usage of words. "Beeeeoooooop" and "Rats" are local phrasal usages. "Click" is a verb familiar to common folk. "Beeeeoooooop" is a word denoting that the Television goes off. When Calvin comes to know that he couldn't control his Father using the same remote, due to distraught, he uses "Rats" which is used to express his state of being insulted.

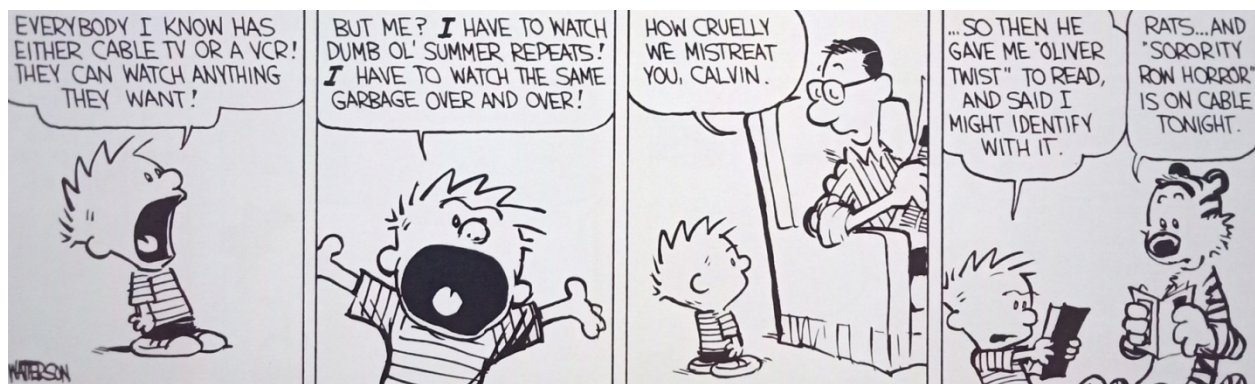
Some specifications are selected to display responses. "Uh-uh" is used for a negative response. "Ah-ha" is used to show surprise. "Aarrghh" is used to express frustration. "Ugh" denotes disgust. "Waahh" is generally used as exclamation. Some slangs are presented to show actions. "Mffpbth" stands for eating. "Hack" refers to cough. "Pow" and "Wapwap" mean to blow something. "Pop" refers to a hit. "Scrape" denotes beating someone or something. "Glunk" means to look at something. Some special attributes are also skillfully presented in the comic strips. "Bippity" is the magic wand of Cinderella, used in comics to represent magic. "Bink Bonk Bang" refers to some unusual emotion. "Poof poof" refers to a gay male. "s-sw-sw-sweet" refers to an over- excited state.

The correct interpretation of the local terms is difficult for people devoid of the particular American dialect. Guesswork can be used to associate the right emotion employed in the comic strip. Thus words and picturization go hand in hand. Strong pictures and grimaces will consume minimal words. Adjectives too find prominence in the comic strips. In most of the occasions, due to anger on the other, Calvin and Hobbes involve in a verbal fight, where vocabularies are strongly injected by Watterson. "Stripehead" is a word used by Calvin to denote Hobbes which

explicitly makes fun of the attributes of a Tiger. “Dummy” is a word regularly used in Calvin and Hobbes which refers to a stupid with no common sense.

Comics makes use of such a variety of language to encourage literacy. Many of the other genres are stuck up only to the literates among the readers. The informal form of language is mostly due to manipulated spellings of the words. The language of comics is not only beneficial in child language acquisition but also in adult language acquisition. Socio-economic status of the geographic area decides the variety of language to be used in the comic strips. Comics, from the status of being considered as an illiterate bound thing, had elevated to the level of professional writing.

Language in Comics is not essentially direct. Treacherous symbols, strange icons and abstract frameworks are also included in comics. The language of Comics is generally metaphorical. A simplified subject opens up a extended vision. Since Comics doesn't succumb to any of the standard literary genres, it is treated as a migrated genre. A regular English statement is rarely found in Comics. Sentences are broken but are constructed meaningfully. Information in comic strips is mostly stripped off here and there to keep the readers engaged. Open –ended comics are often witnessed. The strip will have a definite ending which the comic artist expects the readers to identify and cherish.



The important details are highlighted in comic strips. Specific details grab the attention to get a better insight of the character's mind. The word, “I” is thickened to show Calvin's insistence on his views. Abbreviations are used to make the strip as simple as possible. “VCR” is thus used instead of presenting it as “Video Cassette Recorder”. The frequent usage of Ellipsis, is because speech is naturally a broken form of language. In order to make the speech more

realistic, a series of three dots are used to communicate a breakage or omission of some words. Meaning is unaltered by the use of Ellipsis. The speech gaps are crucial to comic strips as they help the comic artists to avoid rummaging of words and sentences.

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