



RESEARCH PAPER

A Stylistic Analysis of Mohsin's The Diary of a Social Butterfly

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ABSTRACT

This research examines Moni Mohsin's *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* through a stylistic lens while discussing how the novel uses satire to depict an upper-class Pakistani woman who interacts with Pakistani society through social events and modern cultural transformations making it an appealing research object for language study. The research focuses on the lexical and syntactic features of the novel based on Leech and Short's (2007) model. Through the lexical analysis the writer demonstrates how Mohsin's selects nouns along with adjectives and adverbs as well as verbs to create satirical elements within the novel. Through syntactic analysis this study examines declarative and interrogative and exclamatory sentence patterns of the text to understand their role in creating the protagonist voice and narrative style. Through his linguistic excellence Mohsin shows ability to create a socially influential text with aesthetic value. This research can be extended by analyzing phonetic and graphical components of text and also with comparisons of South Asian satirical literature.

KEY WORDS: Stylistic, Lexical, Syntactic, Linguistic, Phonetic, Graphical, Satirical

Introduction

This study explores the stylistic features of Moni Mohsin's *The Diary of a Social Butterfly*, a satirical depiction of Pakistani society. Mohsin, a renowned columnist and National Literary Award recipient, uses humor to critique social and political issues. Through an analysis of vocabulary, syntax, and figurative language, this research uncovers deeper cultural meanings. The novel's protagonist, Butterfly, reflects the aspirations of a specific social class, while Mohsin's blend of Punjabi, Urdu, and English captures Pakistan's linguistic diversity and reinforces the novel's social commentary.

Stylistics is an organized approach to text analysis as it examines textual language and attempts to elucidate how it produces style, affect, and meaning. In practical terms, stylistics serves as a bridge that connects the two significant disciplines of linguistics and literature. The best way to define stylistics is as "the linguistic study of style," according to Leech and Short in their book *Style in Fiction* (2007, p.11). They also state that "using an altered form of words is the most effective means of achieving both clarity and diction and a certain dignity." (p.14)

Stylistic analysis is the analysis of the linguistic devices that are employed in the text to understand the role of those features in creating the text's meaning, the effect that it is intended to convey and its style. This type of analysis includes all aspects of language like linguistics, grammar, syntax, phonology, semantics and more. It aims at knowing how these features are employed by the author in order to develop themes, characters, feelings and even the tone and the mood of the piece of writing. While conducting a stylistic analysis, the research should formulate research questions that address both the "how" and "why" of the text, as exemplified by the questions, "Why does the author here choose to express himself in this particular way?" and "How does language accomplish such-and-such an aesthetic effect (Leech & Short, 2007, p. 13). So, it is evident that the goal of a stylistic analysis is to

provide concrete information, rather than just the researcher's judgement, in order to clarify the language employed in a text in relation to its artistic function (Leech et al., 2007, p.13).

Literature Review

Tariq (2018) argues in his study, *"Style, stylistics and stylistic analysis: A re-evaluation of the modern-day rhetorics of literary discourse"* stylistics is one of the branches of applied linguistics which deals with the language in literary texts, using phonological, syntactical, and semantic patterns for the comprehension of literary works. The discipline evolved in the late 19th century and was developed due to such theorists as Ferdinand de Saussure, Roman Jakobson, and Michael Halliday (p. 46). In structuralist tradition of thought, Saussure input the structural understanding of the break between the signifier and the signified and the significance of the signifying practices throughout the society as being arbitrary. According to Tariq, Jacobson provided the structuralist opinion of poetics, stressing the perform of the language in literature (p. 46). Later, Halliday took the study to the next level by introducing the systemic functional linguistics that looks at how the chosen language provides social meanings (p. 47). Integral to stylistic analysis is the concept of stylistic levels which include phonology refer to the style in terms of sound of the text, graphology refer to the style in terms of the appearance of the text, lexico-syntax which relates to the style in terms of word choice and the grammatical arrangements of such words and finally morphology relates to the style in terms of construction of words in the text. Every level helps to understand the internal structure of a literary text, the relationship between language and meaning, and the senses of beauty. Stylistics is not limited to works of literature only but extends to the analysis of language use by the individual, thus, their style (Tariq, 2018, p. 48).

Canter (2010) explains stylistics in his article, *Methodologies for Stylistic Analysis* as an essential approach that has its base in the investigation of textual facets with a view to revealing a second meaning (p. 1). In the past decade theorists from linguistics, literary theory, education and others have expanded the field and the types of 'texts' amenable to analysis and, thus, transformed the approaches to literature and the texts used in language curriculum. This evolution has led to the use of variety of teaching methods, including not only the great books or canonical literature, but also the current literature regardless of the medium in which it is presented (p. 3). Applied stylistics emerges as a basic concept which refers to the stylistic analysis of texts with special focus on minor details in order to reveal further connotations and impacts. Relating to practical criticism, it concerns itself with the words on the text and some of the grammatical points on the verse, verb, and the individual sentence and various figures of speech such as Imagery and Metaphor. Using a scene from Dickens' "Bleak House", this paper seeks thus to elaborate on how such analysis works, which breaks down the climate created regarding the portrayal of London with the aid of language as it is analyzed (p. 7). This method devotes attention to the scientific logical approach in the analysis of style but as much as it relies on the characterization of the discrepancies supported by checklists or theoretical models, it relies on the subjectivity of the professional's vision and language proficiency. Even though practical stylistics is depicted as the basis of stylistic education, it is described as something simple that should pave way for even more complex methodologies such as corpus stylistics and cognitive poetics, which utilize technologies and advanced ideas for enhanced text analysis. However, as it is a very basic program and the interface is quite intuitive, it is good to start with this program in the development of analytical abilities, which will be useful for teachers and students studying features of semantics and pragmatics (p. 8).

Parina and Leon (2014), in their article, *"A stylistic analysis of the use of modality to identify the point of view in a short story"* define three meta functions to analyze a literary text which are representational meta function, interpersonal meta function and communicative language function (p. 91). The classification of modality into epistemic,

deontic, and dynamic is significant in explaining how speakers proposition with the flexibility that is needed – epistemic deals with uncertain propositions; deontic focuses on permissions and/or prohibitions; dynamic concerns ability (p. 92). He further builds on this by situating modality within literary prose text, by pointing out how it is used to signal such things as the speaker's attitude and perceived reality to the presented events. The distribution of modalities across the text also reflects the levels of positive, negative or neutral feelings or attitudes towards the issues under discussion, and thus shapes the narrative and the reader's perception of that story (p. 93). The language elements used in *Things You Don't Know* are examined with the aid of Simpson's classification on modality so as to perform a stylistic analysis. Thus, this approach is useful for posing such questions as about the most frequent types of modalities and the speaker's attitude to the events, narrative and the general personal stance to the story. The practice of these analytical frameworks will enable one to bring out distant meanings within the text while highlighting the role of modality who assembles all thematic concerns and casts out a sensational feeling to contemplate for the readers (p. 99).

The article, *Stylistic Analysis of Bronte's novel*, evaluate the stylistic features in the novel by Emily Brontë called *Wuthering Heights*. The analysis that the present study adopts involves the stylistic analysis where the text is analyzed for such aspects as figures of speech, language style, and sentence patterns. The author's purpose in this study is to establish the various aspects concerning style for Brontë and the effects upon the novel's reception in terms of both meaning and visual style (Varghese, 2012, p. 47). These are the findings which facilitate a better understanding of her writing and expand the viewers' perception of *Wuthering Heights* as the piece of art.

Material and Methods

This research follows a qualitative research approach to conduct stylistic analysis of the selected text by using the model of Leech and Short as its framework. To examine the language choices of Mohsin, lexical and syntactic analysis is done by closely reading the selected text to find out the key patterns in word choice and sentence structure.

Results and Discussion

Lexical Categories

This part of the study focuses on lexical categories which include nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs, examining their role within the context of the novel. The analysis shows how author uses simple language to describe the characteristics of the novel.

Nouns

The study provides examples of different types of nouns from the novel. Notably, many nouns are repeated throughout the text. Common nouns are great in number as compared to other kinds of nouns which shows that the novelist has used common language. With the simplicity of language, she has elaborated her point of view. Most of the nouns are describing physical features, facial expressions, textures and body parts. There is a repetition of words which emphasizes on external description of the characters and the natural surroundings. Descriptive vocabulary makes Mohsin's style more effective and elusive. The readers find themselves as direct witness of the incidents described in the novel.

Common Nouns

Common nouns are the places, persons or things which are unspecified. For example, in the novel, the nouns like hand, hair, mouth, shoulders, mouth, eyes, cars, head,

neck, feet, face, heart, body, lip, and hip describe physical appearance of the characters. The novelist has repeatedly used these words. The novelist has emphasized on the relations, bondages and family connections with the help of these words; son, father, daughter, mother, mother-in-law, uncle, cousin, husband, wife and family etc. Mohsin has used so many words of Urdu language. Her main objective is to emphasize on the subjectivation in a satirical tone. She deals with reverse gender roles and stereotype theme.

Proper Nouns

Proper nouns are defined as designated entity, regardless of whether it belongs to a certain species. This characteristic means that these words lack semantic significance. A proper noun's values are arbitrary (connotations). According to this criterion, Proper nouns that reflect people or locations are the most significant. (Saragossà, 2014, p. 11)

In the novel, names of characters are used repeatedly. Names of the characters are Butterfly, Janoo, Kulchoo, Auntie Pussy, Uncle Kaukab, Mulloo, Flopsy, Furry, Twinkle, Tonky, Floozie, Boxer, Dropsy etc. Butterfly is the major character of the novel as well as the narrator of the story. Janoo has played a significant role in the development of the plot of the story. Mohsin with through her character Janoo connects different ideas, experiences, cultures and people. The whole story revolves around Butterfly, the protagonist and the narrator of the story. She discussed current affairs of Pakistan in her diary in a satirical way, she frequently uses proper nouns in the novel like countries name, cities, famous people and famous brand's names.

Abstract Nouns

Emotions and feelings of the characters are explained with the help of abstract nouns. All the aspects of life of the butterfly are deeply explained which give an everlasting and comprehensive outlook. Mohsin penetrates into the minds of her characters and read their feelings and emotions. Her character has well expressed through the significant use of abstract nouns. The words like exhausted, jealousy, museebat, demands, unconvinced, disappointment, and intensity show that how beautifully the psychological description of the characters is collaborated. All the words are meaningful. The novelist has conveyed her message to the readers with her simple diction.

Concrete Nouns

Mohsin has used concrete nouns to describe surroundings. Bedroom, makeup, plane, jewelry etc. are the examples. Few of them are repeated again and again to emphasise on physical description of the surrounding areas of the characters. Moni Mohsin has minutely observed and described the information and the features of different places like Khan Market, Lahore, Gulberg and Liberty Market etc. The sophistication of the living style of Lahori people and their carefree life is well depicted with the help of concrete nouns.

Collective Nouns

In the novel, the collective nouns such as servants, friends, people, gang, and guests paint a picture of the protagonist's social interactions and environment. Despite the rich array of collective nouns, adverbs are less frequently used in this context. The few adverbs that appear typically modify how actions are performed or describe the intensity of emotions related to these groups. Examples might include adverbs of manner like comfortably or nicely to describe interactions with friends and guests, or adverbs of degree such as very or completely to express the social butterfly's feelings towards different gatherings. The scarcity of adverbs emphasizes the focus on the groups and their significance in the social butterfly's life, rather than on the specifics of how actions are carried out within these groups.

Adverbs

According to Martiarini & Candra (2019), an adverb can describe or alter a verb, adjective, or other verb. Usually, it provides an answer to the queries of when, when, how, why, under what circumstances, and to what extent. Adverbs frequently finish in-ly (p. 17).

In *Diary of a Social Butterfly*, the adverbs predominantly used fall into the categories of manner, time, and degree. Adverbs of manner such as comfortably, nicely, and brightly describe how actions are performed, adding depth to the narrative and illustrating the social butterfly's interactions and behaviors. Adverbs of time like recently, already, and suddenly provide a sense of timing, constructing a chronological sequence of events and experiences. The social butterfly shows intense emotional states through adverbs of degree which include very, completely, and really. The social butterfly's world becomes vivid and dynamic through constant application of manner, time and degree adverbs which results in an advanced emotional reading experience.

Adjectives

The definition of an adjective describes it as a word that identifies a noun or pronoun. The word expresses clarification about specific items or amounts or kinds, one, the sort, or the quantity. Physical descriptions along with indicators of social position and individual personality traits form the bulk of Mohsin's chosen adjectives in the novel. Physical traits command attention as the adjectives in the novel point to fat, thin and how characters appear with the descriptions black and blonde. The text displays social class through middle-class and rich and poor terminology and well-to-do which demonstrates the economic dimensions of the story. The story reveals personal attributes by adding descriptive adjectives which depict characters as kind-hearted, selfless, stubborn and jealous individuals. These descriptive adjectives collectively create a rich and detailed portrayal of the butterfly's world, this offers readers a comprehensive understanding of the characters' appearances, statuses, and traits.

Verbs

Verb describes a state or an action. There is a core verb that is occasionally expressed by one or more supporting verbs. A verb's number must match that of its subject. (Martiarini & Candra, 2019, p. 17)

In *Diary of a Social Butterfly*, the verbs predominantly reflect a wide array of actions, emotions, and states, showcasing the dynamic and vibrant life of the social butterfly. Action verbs such as call, wear, speak, run, and watch convey physical activities and movements, emphasizing her busy and active lifestyle. State of being verbs like is, am, are, was, and were indicate conditions and situations, providing context to her life and the events unfolding around her. Mental and emotional verbs such as think, wonder, feel, and decide describe internal processes, offering insights into her thoughts and feelings. Communication verbs like say, tell, shout, ask, and announce highlight the importance of interactions and the exchange of ideas in her social world. Collectively, these verbs create a rich and detailed portrayal of the social butterfly's experiences, reflecting her dynamic interactions and emotional depth.

Syntactic Categories

Syntactic analysis includes the analysis of types of sentences and phrases used by the writer in the novel. The main features of grammatical analysis are the sentence types. The author has used declarative sentences, exclamatory sentences and interrogative sentences in the novel.

Declarative Sentences

In this section of study, several declarative statements are noticeable in Mohsin's *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* (2008) revealing the main character's point of view and life events. For instance, the speaker boldly declares their success in silencing everyone with their anti-Iraq war protest: This observed chup karaoing has been done to everybody stated the protagonist, "I've chup karaoed everybody..." (p. 66). They equally express the fearlessness and proactivity of the people from Gulberg by claiming that after this no one can say that, "Nobody can say after this that we Gulberg-wallahs don't stand out and speak up..." (p. 66). The narrator also expresses personal support for the Iraqis, stating, "I immediately pushed myself forward and said keh I tau all along was wanting to be one with Iraqis" (p. 66) and "So I glared at him...Because main Iraqis keh liye feel sochti hoon." (p. 67).

Moreover, the narrator is concerned about the current situation with a statement: "So bore these weeks are" (p. 68). They convey information about McDonald's changing ownership in Lahore: "Suna hai MacDolands has changed hands but in Lahore it has" (p. 68). The narrator outlines personal plans and intentions, such as renting out the Main Boulevard branch for a birthday party: Including the intention to rent Main Boulevard branch for Kulchoo's birthday party: "Yes I am planning to rent the Main Boulevard branch for the birthday party of Kulchoo" (p. 68) and an idea of changing the hall for a particular theme: "I think so I'll have it transferred into a jungle for a Mowgli theme party" (p. 68).

The novel also quotes dialogues and even opinions in this case of the man who loved art and had also loved the lady mayor. For example, Mulloo's speech is reported: The conversation between the characters is quite informal, for instance: "Haw, jaani, said Mulloo" (p. 68). The narrator elaborates on opinions of the character like this: "Trust you to think of it." (p. 68). He also prompts a probable action as follows, "You could switch off the ACs and make it all hot and sweaty and jungle" (p. 68). Further suggestions include financial advice: The two examples that are in sentence form are; "Then you could also get the management to take the bijli off the bill" (p. 68) and "What a big saving that will be for you" (p. 68). The narrator also proposes alternative actions for the party: "And instead of concerning oneself with going to all the expense of a Kitchen Cuisine ka cake, you could just plonk a bunch of rotten bananas on the table" (p. 68) and "Kulchoo can wear a red chaddi instead of a decent pair of Ralph Lauren ki kiddies ki jeans." (p. 68) The conversation continues with the narrator's sweet reply: "well, I replied sweetly" (p. 68), and other claims about the party preparation; "You've accepted the invitation, so that's Colonel Haathi sorted out" (p. 68), and assigning roles; "Zebunnisa will take care of King Loius the ape and Falaknuma of Balloo the bear...perfect!" (p. 68). The narrator humorously refers to Tony bhai: "Tony bhai is tau a natural Kaa the sssnake" (p. 68) while devising a rhetorical question and asking, "Really, with friends like you, who needs animals? (p. 68).

Exclamatory Sentences

The use of exclamatory sentences in Mohsin (2009) is employed to support the protagonist's dramatic and therefore satirical perspective. These sentences are aimed at stressing the emotional heavily charged nature of the story and social message contained into it. For example, the phrase "Dekho zara memsahibs ko! What cheeks!" (p. 82) portrays the speaker disapproval and disbelief of the tricks of memsahibs and focuses on the issue of social status. Likewise, the exclamation of 'So much of mazzal!' (p. 84) portrays the showy nature and excessive eagerness of the character in his social lives. The sarcastic remark, "Haw, voh nahin hai, Return of the Mummy. Itni hum ne enjoy ki, na, aap ka soch-soch keh" (p. 84) Furthermore, the enormous nature of the Denim and Diamonds Ball is pointed out in the undeniable statement, But the Denim and Diamonds Ball was just too much, yaar where the word 'too' is followed by 'much' that gives the idea of both delight and fatigue at the same time. Frustrated, the character storms up and pans on Jonkers coming back from

Haj without a wife, and exclaims "What a loser, yaar!" (p. 88), to make fun of societal expectations to get married. From the disbelief in the quote "Couldn't even find one single girl in four million Muslims!" (Mohsin 88), the social relations and expectations are seen to be unrealistic.

The feeling of horror and repulsion to the actuality of eating meat is powerfully depicted in "Hai Ram! Chhee-chhee!" (p. 93). The disdain with which a bombing incident is viewed is as emphatically expressed in "Haw, look at them how mean they are throwing bomb on poor Shock Aziz." (p. 98). These exclamations are necessary to convey the character's ethical values and feelings about people. Indeed, everything is overemphasized; thereby, idioms and proverbs like "Bas, poocho na" (p.100) would bear a funny tone in other circumstances, but as what Mohsin portrayed, it sounded as follows: "At least, you asked me" (p. 100). The last words of the character "Uff, taubah, so much to think about" (p. 107) reflects an amalgamation of frustration from the pressure put by society.

Mohsin's use of exclamatory sentences in her novel not only contributes towards effective portrayal of the protagonist's voice, which is lively and multifaceted, but also provides the means for social satire, revealing the subtleties and oddities of social reality.

Interrogative Sentences

In Moni Mohsin's (2008) novel, the use of interrogative sentences serves as a crucial narrative device that highlights the protagonist's internal conflicts, social commentary, and character dynamics. Mohsin employs these questions to reveal the protagonist's complex relationships with friends and family, as well as her sardonic perspective on societal norms and personal dilemmas. For instance, the narrator questions her friends' betrayal with, "Why? Because they've stabbed me in the back, that's why" (p. 83), which underscores her sense of betrayal and mistrust. This rhetorical question not only expresses her feelings but also invites the reader to engage with her emotional turmoil. The narrator's inquiry, "But how?" (p. 83) demonstrates both her social competitive edge and her self-doubt through her questions about outshining her successful friends. The speaker emphasizes this point by asking "Kaun si?" (p. 84). The character wants to understand a movie reference because she desires to maintain relevance among friends. The interrogation, "Haan?" (p. 88) She has allegedly drained all my religious water secretly according to her - the narrator says this mockingly to describe how her mother's appearance changed following her Haj pilgrimage. Jennifer uses an abrasive tone to question Jonkers when he claims that a million people attend the Haj pilgrimage inquiring "What do you mean one million you paagal?" (p. 89). The statement asked whether the celebrities were women or did they belong to some other unknown category. Right after Jonkers says "one million" (p. 89) she follows with an ironic statement that mocks the question, "And what about the other million? Were they women or were they something else?" (89). The volunteers seemed to be female entities but possibly represented another identity altogether. Through these statements (89) the narrator displays her disbelief and campaign against overstated declarations. She displays the same disbelief toward personal issues as when she asks "Now what was wrong with the remaining million women?" (p. 89) Jonkers encounters no acceptable match during his wife-searching activities among the pilgrims according to the narrator. (p. 89) The narrator wants to understand how many goals the team has achieved through her statement "How many goals have they done?" (p. 92) Her insufficient interest in cultural activities manifests when she asks about the score of a cricket competition at line 91. She confronts future judgments from others when she says, "Because I am like that only" (92) in response to their questions about the reason for her actions. Through her character the author investigates how the narrator displays social interest and knowledge by asking questions about important people as illustrated by her statement "What's a high-profile Sindhi doing in Iraq?" (p, 95), and the subsequent, "Really? And who's that?" (p. 95). The narrator emphasizes her doubt about the upper class through her questioning statements and Janoo addresses the narrator with the question "Note kar rahe ho? this is the way to do things" (p.

96) she seeks validation before society while aspiring to follow proper behavior rules before getting married. Janoo faces a dilemma because the question demands her perspective on money-based wedding costs at a time when societal elites remain skeptical. Crore? Two crores. Or ten, even?" (p. 97) The narrator demonstrates knowledge of money overconsumption through the dialogue. Through the phrase "But so nice he looks, na, so nice, with his grey-grey-se baal to match his grey-grey-si outlook?" (p. 112) the novel shows the protagonist becoming aware of herself and her social perspective, and her self-reflective query, "Honestly, kya ho gya hai mujhay?" (p. 112).

Conclusion

The stylistic study of *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* shows Mohsin's use of lexical and syntactic elements to increase readability and engagement among the readers. The majority of nouns, particularly common nouns, reflects the novel's colloquial tone, which makes it relevant and immersive. whereas adjectives add vitality by providing detailed descriptions of characters and settings, enriching the story with color and depth. Verbs, particularly in past forms, play a crucial role in driving the plot forward, while adverbs add distinction by refining the depiction of actions and situations. The grammatical analysis reveals diversity of sentence structure, declarative sentences ensure clarity, while interrogative and exclamatory sentences add expressiveness in the dialogues. This strategic blend of linguistic features makes the novel engaging, accessible, and reflective of its social environment.

Recommendations

This study can be extended by incorporating the other two features presented in Leech and Short's framework, the phonological and graphical aspects to get more comprehensive understanding of author's writing style. Moreover, a comparative study with other satirical work or contemporary South Asian fiction can offer further insight into the stylistic tendency of the region's literature.

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