

Linguistic Analysis of the Select Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa

G. Zeenathaman, M.A., M.Phil.

=====



Bapsi Sidhwa

Courtesy: <https://zoroastrians.net/2015/07/27/bapsi-sidhwa-on-growing-up-in-pakistan-writing-and-the-future-of-the-parsi-community/>

Abstract

Stylistics is the application of theoretical ideas and analytical techniques drawn from Linguistics and Socio-Linguistics to the study of literary text. The study of style in literature can be referred as a figurative language, use of dialects, grammatical choices as an indicator of style, meter, and rhythm. It can be further described as the study of literature as a mode of communication. The modern Literary Stylistics draws upon the area and adds to it the

interpretive goals of modern Literary Criticism. In both cases, the use of linguistic methodology has allowed stylistics to move beyond earlier normative and prescriptive descriptions of correct styles to a fuller analysis of language itself and the purposes to which the language is put. The aim of the paper is not only to describe the formal features of the texts for the own sake, but in order to show the functional significance for the interpretation of the text. This paper discusses the fictions of Bapsi Sidhwa. It deals about the use of poetical terms in the novels, Lexical analysis, Structure of the novel, cohesion and coherence in the novels.

Keywords: Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa, Theoretical ideas, analytical techniques, normative and prescriptive, Syntactic analysis, cohesion and coherence.

Linguistic Peculiarity as the Focus

The present research is an attempt to make a stylistic study of selected works of Bapsi Sidhwa from linguistic point of view. Therefore, center of our attention is on finding out the stylistic devices that present linguistic peculiarity in the writings of the concerned author. Sidhwa's language is aimed to make verbal communication wealthy. The use of literary resources is marked in the works of Sidhwa. In addition to that, Sidhwa's style is different from other writers because Sidhwa has exceptional skills in writing such as: resourcefulness, power of imagination and her experiments in life. Sidhwa's stylistic devices are formed at different linguistic levels. Sidhwa mixes imagination with reality because her novels are her reactive experiments.

All the stylistic devices which are used by Sidhwa in her works create cohesion and coherence, i.e., they make a text sensible. She uses stylistic devices in such a way that make her style deviant from the language norms and different from the style of other writers as well. This study makes an attempt to analyze Sidhwa's texts at different linguistic levels namely; phonological level, syntactic level, semantic level and discourse analysis.

It is well known that Bapsi Sidhwa is as a famous writer who took many awards in literature. Sidhwa's fictions are affected through the use of literary resources, her skills in writing

and her experiments in life. In her novels the use of events, time and place is displayed because of Sidhwa's experience in her life. Her novels she has used comical terms and community colloquial words.

Linguistics and Stylistics

The relation between linguistics and stylistics is that linguistics is scientific device to the study of language while stylistics studies the elements of language or the art of communication. Therefore, language is a vital instrument for speech, meaning and has special significance for stylistics. On the other hand, literature without language is non-literature. In stylistics, we find that meaning plays the vital role of attracting the reader/listener's attention to the context. For that reason, stylistics without meaning is non-stylistics. Stylistics is an applied branch of linguistics. So, the study of literary language takes stylistics as a scientific approach. It is well accepted that style is created when there is deviation or when there is choice between alternative expressions. In linguistic analysis, the study of style of a literary text is an important instrument by which linguistics, pragmatics and rhetoric can be related. Hence, the correlation between linguistics and stylistics is cannot be denied.

Multiple Meanings and Other Semantic Devices

This research deals with the stylistic devices which Sidhwa's uses play a vital role in her novels. It is seen that the expressions Sidhwa uses in her fiction have multiple meanings; for example, transferred and lexical meaning, emotive and logical meaning, explicit and implicit meaning, extended and face-value meaning and the like. Sidhwa's style show that the words are put together to show the rhetorical expressions through the use of an allegorical meaning which is derived from the literal meaning. We have noted that metaphor, simile, irony, symbolism are used as semantic stylistic devices which dominate the literary work in Sidhwa's novels. For example, the sentence 'I met the most gorgeous guy' (166). It is formed to display the mixture of contrary emotion between the adjective 'gorgeous' and the verb 'met'. Here, it is a stylistic device taken from Sidhwa's work as 'Metaphor'. Another sentence 'Jo inflated like a white Whale right before Feroza's alarmed eyes' (166). Sidhwa has used many similes in her novels. Other sentences she has used many stylistic device, like oxymoron, apostrophe. Like this , we find that

the use of stylistic devices is displayed structurally. The style of Sidhwa is taken into consideration with reference to the structural design of utterances.

Object and Subject, and Generation of Sentences

As a writer, Bapsi Sidhwa's resourcefulness, experiences in life and power of imagination emerges clearly in her works. Hence, there is the difference between the syntactical patterns of English language and the special structural arrangement which Sidhwa uses in her literary works. It is well-known that the concordance between Generative Grammar 'deep structure and surface structure' and syntactical stylistic devices, by which unlimited sentences are generated within the given patterns, has been established in Sidhwa's context. For example, the sentence *Her body I painted*, cited from Sidhwa's fiction, is cited to show the placement of the object before the subject. Here the speaker's emotion is brought forth without changing the meaning of sentence. However, we find that the word order is changed in the expression 'guilty was I'. Accordingly, the placement of link-verb and predicate of the above case is remarked before its subject.

Repetition of Word or Phrase, etc.

The repetition of word or phrase and other syntactical stylistic devices are noticed in Sidhwa's style. Moreover, the parallel constructions are used to give musical effect to the discourse. For instance, the sentences 'Mike, I love you, Mike-pleeeeeease don't leave don't leave me, Mike'(167)' are observed as complete parallel constructions. And the quick change from passive to active or vice versa is taken as a stylistic device 'chiasmus'. As seen in the example, taken from the work of Bapsi Sidhwa, 'Maybe we Americans have to stop being so naive'. is used to show a stylistic structural device 'chiasmus'.

She says to her sister that it is better for her to be away from such virtues which make her weak enough to handle her own affairs. She forbids her to donate blood for the injured while she encourages and motivates others to participate in this holy task. She further says that she can't afford her weak body at her home (204).

Ellipsis

In her works, Sidhwa uses another syntactical stylistic device 'ellipsis' for displaying the speaker's feeling such as 'Worse than madness. Sanity'. There is a stylistic effect by which the two meanings are put at the same time as shown by the directive expression and transferred expression in the sentence. The sexual acts are not unconnected'. Consequently, in the sentence 'Couldn't a fire out-run a galloping horse?' the rhetorical effect is materialized by the speaker's passion as a doubt or challenge. There are other devices that are used in the works of Bapsi Sidhwa, for example, the peculiar linkages 'polysyndeton' and the like.

Other Devices

It deals with the stylistic devices at the phonological level. Also, we have remarked that poetic devices are used in the works of Bapsi Sidhwa to make successive words or sentences in the discourse phonologically cohesive. The use of poetic stylistic devices 'onomatopoeia, alliteration, consonance and rhythm' are taken into account as features of poetic language. Therefore, Sidhwa uses these features to draw the attention of the reader/listener to her works through imitating aural expressiveness. However, the choice of words and structures determine a phonological aspect Sidhwa uses in her novels. Consequently, we find that onomatopoeia can be used directly as 'Zap! Zap! The elastic stung her waist and she lowered her nightdress (228).

In the sentence ' There are no Brahmins with caste-markers – or Hindu in dhotis with bodhis – only hardis of mnolim refuses'(66) two stylistic devices 'rhythm and alliteration' are used to display the repetition of the sound [b] at the beginning of the successive expressions 'Brahmins', 'bodhis' and 'dhotis'. 'Jee, can I help you carry something, jee' (53). There is rhythm because of the structural similarity. The succession of stressed and unstressed syllables in the sentence. Therefore, Bapsi's style is appreciated because of her ability to play with rhythm in the context.

Cohesion

In the aspects of the cohesion of literary text in the form of discourse stylistic features. Bapsi Sidhwa in her fictions refers to objects, places, people and time to create the world of

narrative and also to extend the literary texts to events that help the readers/listeners to live in a real world. Moreover, Bapsi Sidhwa shows Exophoric reference in her work as a linguistic device by which the events of the context are connected together to make the world of narrative real.

Furthermore, it is well-known to us that Endophora is used to make Bapsi's novels cohesive and to make the texture of text understandable. Cataphoric references have been used at the beginning of first paragraphs in Sidhwa's novels under analysis. For example, the common name "boy and man ' and the pronoun 'jee' are used to refer forwards to the proper name 'Menek'.

Sidhwa also makes use of Cataphora as a linguistic device to make readers/listeners familiar with the essential character of his novels. There are many other important aspects through which the works of Sidhwa can be appreciated and analyzed. Sidhwa uses connective ties to create cohesion and coherence within her fictions. We notice that the phrases and sentences are presented grammatically and coherently. Yet, the successive ideas are formed in order to make the meaning understandable for the readers/listeners. Hence, the coherent relations, or cohesive devices are used in the text to make it understandable in the context of use. These devices are tools that provide new information or add extra knowledge for the comprehension of the discourse. The Cataphora is described as

“Suddenly he springs up. Thumping his noisy trident on the ground, performing a curious jumping dance, he shouts: Wah Allah! Wah Allah! So loudly that several people who have been watching the goings-on from afar, I hastily get up and scamper over. Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims form a thick circle round us. . . . I can tell from the reverent faces around me that they believe they are in the presence of a holyman crazed by his love of God. And the I madder the mystic, the greater his power” (99).

Allegory is another literary device used by Bapsi Sidhwa to depict the trauma of Partition. The child Lenny is affected by the violence at Lahore. The whole world is burning. The air on my face is so hot I think my flesh and clothes will catch fire. I start screaming:

hysterically sobbing (137). The scenes of violence and arson and above all the venomous hatred of friends who had months earlier insisted on the impossibility of violence, have a frightening impact on the young Lenny. Violence breeds violence and Lenny is also a victim. Her rage is directed at her collection of dolls. In a frenzy she acts. "I pick out a big, bloated celluloid doll. I turn it upside down and pull its legs apart. The elastic that holds them together stretches easily. I let one leg go and it snaps back, attaching itself to the brittle torso"(138). The destructive urge overcomes Lenny and she is not satisfied till assisted by her brother Adi she wrenches out the legs of the doll and examines the spilled insides.

“The whole world is burning. The air on my face is so hot I think my flesh and
Clothes will catch fire. I start screaming: hysterically sobbing (137)”.

Lexical Analysis

The data for the lexical analysis includes the texts of the following two novels of Bapsi Sidhwa. The use of the adjectives and their interpretation go hand in hand because of the nature of study in which the effect of every adjective demands that it is interpreted immediately. That is the reason that both sections of data collection and date interpretations have been merged. The texts included in the lexical analysis are, *The Ice-Candy Man* and *An American Brat* Because Sidhwa is relatively unknown novelist in English reading population. One of the striking features noticed by any reader of Sidhwan fiction is the excessive use of adjectives in her writings. She is too concerned with describing the individuals, places and things as vividly as possible, and for this intended vividness she resorts to adjectives which are exploited by her rather excessively.

The use qualifying the abstract nouns such as time, journey, meditation and other such words. So it bears little or no relevance to the question of treatment of gender and gender equality. Sidhwa uses more abstract nouns like describing the characters,

“Feroza found Mr.Miller kind and generous”(208).

In the use of old expressions, Sidhwa exhibits her exactitude as she usually talks about in exact figures like five-years old etc. This tendency towards exactitude is not in accordance with the female disposition, who are believed to be talking in approximate terms, especially when it

comes to the issue of age. Twenty-three years old, strong and pioneering, he saw no future for himself in his ancestral village, tucked away in the forests of Central India, and resolved to seek his fortune in the hallowed pastures of the Punjab. Once Zaitoon over heard a woman saying that a ten- year-old was pregnant. Like its preceding word, old has mainly been used for the indication of abstract entities, particularly for the mentioning of age. The relevance of this adjective with our thematic consideration is in an indirect way. It is typical of women to be over-concerned with the age, so Sidhwa's preoccupation with it can be regarded as a feministic penchant.

“The two shrewd old women got on very well when they saw each other, by tacit agreement, was not happen” (45).

The adjective *Small* occurs to qualify mostly the concrete objects. The objects like car, bed and tables etc. are described by using small as a qualifier. As like the preceding qualifier, small, since it has been used for inanimate entities, has little concern with the issue of gender and gender equality. They came upon small stone structures, little make- believe temples, as if masons, halfway between constructing dolls' houses, had become serious, and turned them into Mandirs with spiralling cones and sacred decorations. Jerbanoo filled a small tub with water from the tap in their room and placed it on the balcony. It was a tiny windowless cubicle with an iron bedstead, an iron chair and a small steel table. I lie on a white wooden table in a small room. Jerbanoo swayed, and in a small, defeated voice, said, 'I feel fainting'. Mary relented. She helped her down and sat her on the chair by the fire. As we have seen that the above discussed adjectives contribute very little in the thematic understanding of the Sidhwa's fiction. They, however, highlight a very apt point i.e. the characteristic tendency in the women to exaggerate with the excessive use of adjectives. This tendency can also be seen from another perspective and with a less negative implications viz. the acute observation of the women. Anyhow, apart from being a feminist writer, she is a female writer and that is what we see through the study of adjectives.

To Conclude

The study presented several linguistic and stylistic devices used by Bapsi Sidhwa. The use of adjectives, figurative terms, cohesion and coherence of Bapsi Sidhwa's fiction is noted.

The corpus analysis of Sidhwa's writing shows that there is a substantial amount of adjectives used to qualify the nouns. All these devices make her novel attractive and meaningful to the readers.

References

Sidhwa, Bapsi. *An American Brat*. New Delhi: Penguin. 1993. Print.

---. *Ice – Candy – Man*. New Delhi: Penguin. 1889. Print.

Batra, Shakti and Bapsi-Sidhwa: *Ice-Candy-Man*. (A Critical Study), New Delhi : Surjeet Publications, 2015.

Basu, Ipoamudra. "The repetition of silence: Partition Rape, and Female labor in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*". *South Asian Review*: Vol.XXVIII, No.2, 2007.

Lyons, John. *Language and Linguistics An Introduction*, Cambridge University Press. 1981. Print.

G. Zeenathaman, M.A., M.Phil.
Assistant Professor of English
Adhiyaman Arts and Science College for Women
Uthangarai 635207
Tamilnadu
India
zeenaashiq@gmail.com