Conference Paper

A Discourse Stylistics Analysis on the Regularities in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe the regularities of the American Postmodern Novelist: Alice Walker with a focus on a character's and/or narrator's mind style in a stylistic and narratological approach. This study aimed to attain the regularities from the American novelist's literary work and how the regularities/irregularities occur in the novel to frame the style of the novelist in producing her literary work. This study was a descriptive qualitative by taken into account of stylistics categories and mind style which were applied to the Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. The data of this study were taken from Alice Walker's novel entitled *The Color Purple*. The result of the study showed the occurrences and the forms of regularities in the novel *The Color* Purple by Alice Walker which represented the style of the novelist in creating her literary work. The bold character of African-American Vernacular English that were found in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* showed that the novelist poured their mind style in their literary works by showing their stylistic options in producing the novel. By showing their writing style the novelists were contributed to the development of national language in America.

Keywords: discourse stylistics, mind style, postmodern, American novelist, African-American

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1. Introduction

The term style is one that commonly used in everyday conversation and writing that it seems so naturally and frequently that it is inclined to take it for granted without inquiring just what it might mean (Verdon, 2002: 3). It involves first of all the power to put fact with clarity and brevity. Style has also been defined as the description and analysis of the variability forms of linguistic items in actual language use. It is one of sub-class of language variety (Saleh, 2018: 798). Leech (1969: 14) quotes Aristotle saying that the most effective means of achieving both clarity and diction and a certain dignity is the use of altered form of words. Every individual has his or her own unique way of doing

things and that no two persons are of exactly the same character. There are always distinctive features that distinguish one person from the other; thus in literary style, one is able to differentiate the writings based on the use of language, among other things. A person's style may also be shaped by his social and political background, religious inclination, culture, education, geographical location, etc.

The foregoing researches in discourse analysis and literary stylistics over the past decades revealed the possibility of approaching these analyses in more productive ways. Since any discourse has its unique framework, or organization, one way of showing the individuality of a discourse is by analyzing its organization as discourse. Discourse stylistics focuses on largely implicit and highly ideological background of the text. It deals with the ideological undercurrents of discourse. Discourse stylistics aims to introduce readers to a procedure of observation which trains to critical reading. The point of principle of discourse stylistics is that there is no linguistically identifiable distinction between literary and non-literary texts, and that literature is a culturally defined notion.

Discourse stylistics examines the form and function of linguistic constructs which are beyond the sentence in specific social, cultural or historical contexts, as explored in a given discourse. In other words, the model is a discourse-based stylistics. The concept of discourse itself originates from the discovery that language operates within a pragmatic context and that it is necessary to delineate and apply that context to its explication. Discourse stylistics is an innovative approach in stylistic analysis. It is a combination of discourse and stylistic analysis and a branch of stylistics which draws specifically on the techniques and methods of discourse analysis (Simpson, 2002:136).

So far there have been various discussions on doing discourse stylistics of literary works genres: poetry. However, the concern on prose fiction is still very limited. This brings up the thought of doing discourse stylistics on prose, especially on American novel. Moreover the emerging of postmodern that breaks the norms and system of modern society also affected the world of English literature. Postmodern brings with it a new air for literature with its closeness to stylistics; which is this study aims to search on: the regularities of style of the postmodern American novelists through their linguistic properties and mind style of Leech and Short's Discourse Stylistics. This study also provides identification of style of the postmodern novelists that can enrich the knowledge of English literature and discourse stylistics.

2. Literature Review

In the 1980s came the term discourse stylistics, made popular in the 1990s through the sub-title of Ronald Carter & Paul Simpson work (1989), and marking a new direction in stylistics away from formal analysis to contextualized, discourse-oriented approaches, including sociolinguistic, pragmatic and feminist (Wales, 2014: 136). The application of discourse stylistics provides a testing basis about discourse and also provides literary criticism with a useful means for appreciating literary appreciation and it is a natural development from both (Ghailan, 2006: 14).

The study of discourse stylistics promises discourse analysis a useful testing ground for their hypotheses about discourses and literary critics a useful tool for illuminating literary works and highlighting matters within them requiring explanation (Hoey, 2005: 128). It would therefore appear to offer a fruitful way forward for both discourse analysis and stylistics, and is, after all, a natural development from both.

Leech and Short (2007: 26) defined the word 'style' has a fairly uncontroversial meaning: it refers to the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on. They further elaborate Saussure who distinct between *langue* and *parole*, *langue* being the code or system of rules common to speakers of a language (such as English), and *parole* being the particular uses of this system, or selections from this system, that speakers or writers make on this or that occasion. Style, then, pertains to *parole*: it is selection from a total linguistic repertoire that constitutes a style.

The identification of effects and of specific stylistic choices is tied to the problem of identifying a causal relation between style and effect. The stylistic mentality is always on the lookout for one or more of the pattern, repetition, recurrent structures, ungrammatical or 'language-stretching' structures, and large internal contrasts of content or presentation (Toolan, 1998: 2).

Leech and Short (2007: 12) provide a cyclic motion whereby linguistic observation stimulates or modifies literary insight, and whereby literary insight in its turn stimulates further linguistic observation. This motion is something like the cycle of theory formulation and theory testing which underlies scientific method. The cycle is represented in Figure 1.

Flergin (2011) in his article entitled *Cohesion in Conversation: A Discourse Stylistics Approach on Amitav Gosh's Sea of Poppies* writes on how cohesion in discourse stylistics is important as far as a text is concerned. This article illustrates how the author makes use cohesive markers to create cohesion in the novel and establish a unique
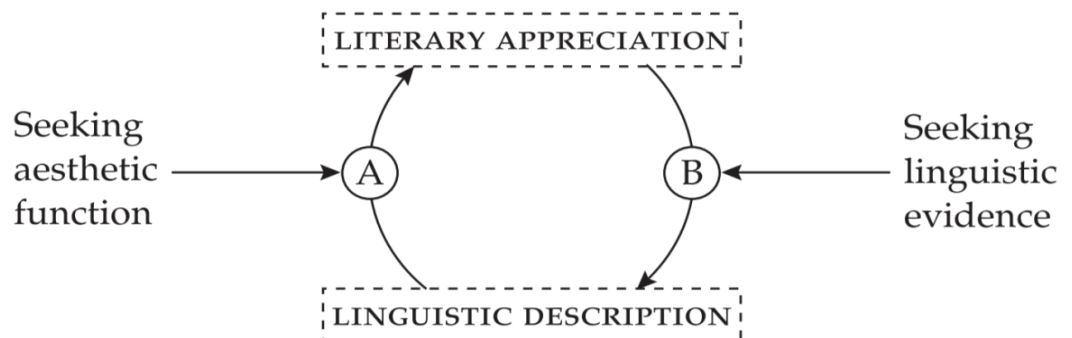
Figure 1: Cycle of Theory Formulation and Testing (Leech and Short, 2007: 12).

style in story telling. He makes the assumption that stylistic analysis of literary and non literary texts is hardly enough to bring a comprehensive linguistic appreciation has led the stylisticians to explore new approaches in stylistics. Discourse stylistics widely opens the door of stylistics to a dynamic world.

Enyi (2015) conducts a study entitled *Style of Nigerian English Conversation: A Discourse-Stylistic Analysis of a Natural Conversation* which aim at identifying the common features of English conversation that occur among educated Nigerian. By using the features of conversational English by Crystal and Davy, the study aims to identify the formal linguistic features of the Nigerian English conversation. The result of the study shows that the Nigerian English conversation has indexical markers which can be traced back to its socio-cultural and sociolinguistic context where English is positioned as a second language.

Leech and Short provide categories that may be used when doing stylistics analysis. The categories are placed under four general headings: lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, and cohesion and context (2007: 61-64).

1. Lexical categories:

(a) General. Is the vocabulary simple or complex? formal or colloquial? descriptive or evaluative? general or specific? How far does the writer make use of the emotive and other associations of words, as opposed to their referential meaning? Does the text contain idiomatic phrases or notable collocations, and if so, with what kind of dialect or register are these idioms or collocations associated? Is there any use of rare or specialised vocabulary? Are any

particular morphological categories noteworthy? To what semantic fields do words belong?

(b) Nouns. Are the nouns abstract or concrete? What kinds of abstract nouns occur? What use is made of proper names? Collective nouns?

(c) Adjectives. Are the adjectives frequent? To what kinds of attribute do adjectives refer? Physical? Psychological? Visual? Auditory? Colour? Referential? Emotive? Evaluative? etc. Are adjectives restrictive or nonrestrictive? Gradable or non-gradable? Attributive or predicative?

(d) Verbs. Do the verbs carry an important part of the meaning? Are they stative (referring to states) or dynamic (referring to actions, events, etc.)? Do they 'refer' to movements, physical acts, speech acts, psychological states or activities, perceptions, etc.? Are they transitive, intransitive, linking (intensive), etc.? Are they factive or non-factive?

(e) Adverbs. Are adverbs frequent? What semantic functions do they perform? Is there any significant use of sentence adverbs?

2. Grammatical categories

(a) Sentence types. Does the author use only statements (declarative sentences), or do questions, commands, exclamations or minor sentence types (such as sentences with no verb) also occur in the text? If these other types appear, what is their function?

(b) Sentence complexity. Do sentences on the whole have a simple or a complex structure? What is the average sentence length (in number of words)? What is the ratio of dependent to independent clauses? Does complexity vary strikingly from one sentence to another? Is complexity mainly due to (i) coordination, (ii) subordination, or (iii) parataxis (juxtaposition of clauses or other equivalent structures)? In what parts of a sentence does complexity tend to occur? For instance, is there any notable occurrence of anticipatory structure (e.g. of complex subjects preceding the verbs, of dependent clauses preceding the subject of a main clause)?

(c) Clause types. What types of dependent clause are favoured: relative clauses, adverbial clauses, different types of nominal clauses (*that*-clauses, *wh*-clauses, etc.)? Are reduced or non-finite clauses commonly used and, if so, of what type are they (infinitive clauses, *-ing* clauses, *-ed* clauses, verbless clauses)?

(d) **Clause structure**. Is there anything significant about clause elements (e.g. frequency of objects, complements, adverbials; of transitive or intransitive verb constructions)? Are there any unusual orderings (initial adverbials, fronting of object or complement, etc.)? Do special kinds of clause construction occur (such as those with preparatory *it* or *there*)?

(e) Noun phrases. Are they relatively simple or complex? Where does the complexity lie (in premodification by adjectives, nouns, etc., or in postmodification by prepositional phrases, relative clauses, etc.)? Note occurrence of listings (e.g. sequences of adjectives), coordination or apposition.

(f) Verb phrases. Are there any significant departures from the use of the simple past tense? For example, notice occurrences and functions of the present tense; of the progressive aspect; of the perfective aspect; of modal auxiliaries. Look out for phrasal verbs and how they are used.

(g) Other phrase types. Is there anything to be said about other phrase types: prepositional phrases, adverb phrases, adjective phrases?

(h) Word classes. Having already considered major or lexical word classes, we may here consider minor word classes ('function words'): prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, determiners, auxiliaries, interjections. Are particular words of these types used for particular effect (e.g. the definite or indefinite article; first person pronouns *I*, *we*, etc.; demonstratives such as *this* and *that*; negative words such as *not*, *nothing*, *no*)?

(i) General. Note here whether any general types of grammatical construction are used to special effect; e.g. comparative or superlative constructions; coordinative or listing constructions; parenthetical constructions; appended or interpolated structures such as occur in casual speech. Do lists and coordinations (e.g. list of nouns) tend to occur with two, three or more than three members? Do the coordinations, unlike the standard construction with one conjunction, tend to omit conjunctions (*sun, moon, stars*) or have more than one conjunction?

3. Figures of speech

(a) Grammatical and lexical. Are there any cases of formal and structural repetition (anaphora, parallelism, etc.) or of mirror-image patterns (chiasmus)? Is the rhetorical effect of these one of antithesis, reinforcement, climax, anticlimax, etc?

(b) Phonological schemes. Are there any phonological patterns of rhyme, alliter-ation, assonance, etc.? Are there any salient rhythmical patterns? Do vowel and consonant sounds pattern or cluster in particular ways? How do these phonological features interact with meaning?

(c) Tropes. Are there any obvious violations of, or departures from, the linguistic code? For example, are there any neologisms (such as *Americanly*)? Deviant lexical collocations (such as *portentous infants*)? Semantic, syntactic, phono-logical, or graphological deviations? Such deviations (although they can occur in everyday speech and writing) often be the clue to special interpreta-tions associated with traditional poetic figures of speech such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, paradox and irony. If such tropes occur, what kind of special interpretation is involved (e.g. metaphors can be classified as personifying, animising, concretising, synaesthetic, etc.)? Because of its close connection with metaphor, simile may also be considered here. Does the text contain any similes, or similar constructions? What dissimilar semantic fields are related through simile?

4. Context and Cohesion

(a) Cohesion. Does the text contain logical or other links between sentences (e.g. coordinating conjunctions, or linking adverbials)? Or does it tend to rely on implicit connections of meaning? What sort of use is made of cross-reference by pronouns? by substitute forms, or ellipsis? Alternatively, is any use made of elegant variation – the avoidance of repetition by the substitution of a descriptive phrase? Are meaning connections reinforced by repetition of words and phrases, or by repeatedly using words from the same semantic field?

(b) Context. Does the writer address the reader directly, or through the words or thoughts of some fictional character? What linguistic clues are there of the addresser–addressee relationship? What attitude does the author imply towards his or her subject? If a character's words or thoughts are represented, is this done by direct quotation (direct speech), or by some other method (e.g. indirect speech, free indirect speech)? Are there significant changes of style according to who is supposedly speaking or thinking the words on the page?

Alice Walker, one of the United States' preeminent writers, is an award-winning author of novels, stories, essays, and poetry. In 1983, Walker became the first African-American woman to win a Pulitzer Prize for fiction with her novel *The Color Purple*, which also

won the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the National Book Award for Fiction. It was later adapted into a film and musical of the same name. Walker's novel *The Color Purple* tells the story of a young black woman in America, through a series of entries that span through twenty years of her life. Dealing with abuse, rape, racism, sisterhood, feminism and hatred, *The Color Purple* embodies a journey violence, beauty and self-acceptance. Taking place mostly in rural Georgia, the story focuses on the life of women of color in the southern United States in the 1930s, addressing numerous issues including their exceedingly low position in American social culture. Alsen (1996: 23) considers Alice Walker as one of romantic postmodernism writers, the claim that comes from the list of disjunctive postmodernists in the *Columbia History of the American Novel*.

3. Research Method

This study was a descriptive qualitative research that involves interpretative, naturalistic approach to the subject matter (Emzir in Muhammad, 2014: 34). In this study, discourse stylistic was used and applied to Alice Walker's literary work, which is novel, to be analyzed in a descriptive qualitative way. This study is qualitative in order to be able to answer the questions on representation of style of the chosen postmodern novelists in their chosen literary work, whether or not any regularities of style in the novel.

The instrument of this research is the researcher herself. It comes along with the design of this study, a qualitative research, which urges the researcher as the instrument. Muhammad (2014: 40) furthermore explains that the researcher becomes the main instrument for data collection because she is able to adapt with the real situation on the field.

The data were taken from the novel Alice Walker, The Color Purple, published in 1982 by Pocket Books in New York. The data of this study are in the forms of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs taken from the three chosen novels. The data were obtained by applying categories of discourse stylistic analysis by Leech and Short (2007: 61-64).

The data were collected through several steps in accordance to the qualitative research design. Specifically to this research that involving discourse stylistics analysis, the data were collected through observing and doing literature review. In data collection process, there are two steps involved: data reduction and data display.

3.1. Data reduction

First, the researcher did an observation by doing close reading to the chosen novels to look for the data for this research. Here the researcher collected clauses and also sought linguistic features to be analyzed based on the theory and approach used.

Second, from the data that have been collected the researcher selected clauses that are really suitable with the research questions and with the theory as well as the approach of discourse stylistics by Leech and Short (2007: 61-64).

3.2. Data display

The data were classified based on the theory and approach used that is discourse stylistics: the linguistic properties and mind style. There were two steps involved in doing the data display. The first step was data coding that was done by giving numbers to each line entry of the novel. After the data were being coded, the next step was displaying the data. The data displayed were taken from the novels that had been coded. The data displayed are based on Leech's Stylistic Categories (2007: 61-64).

The data were analyzed based on the research questions of the research. The data were applied to the theory of Discourse Stylistics, specifically on the novel's linguistic properties by using Leech and Short's four categories: lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, and cohesion and context.

4. Result and Discussion

The Color Purple is a novel written by Alice Walker, an African-American novelist. The novel tells the story of a young black woman in America, through a series of entries that span through twenty years of her life. Dealing with abuse, rape, racism, sisterhood, feminism and hatred, *The Color Purple* embodies a journey violence, beauty and self-acceptance.

4.1. The color purple's stylistic categories

Based on Leech's stylistic categories (2007: 61-64), the style of Alice Walker in her novel *The Color Purple* can be stated as follows.

1. Lexical Categories

(a) General

Under the general categories, there are words found in the novel that indicate the African-American dialect. Her choice to use African-American dialect shows that Alice Walker put so much of her African background in her literary work and at the same time it relates to the setting of the novel. The words are mammy for mommy, naw for no, git for get, ast for ask, and suh for sir and nuff for enough.

2. Grammatical Categories

(a) Word classes

The use of pronoun Mr. _____ for one of the main male character that plays an important role for Cecil, the main female character shows that Alice Walker keeps the name to be as general as possible yet it still bears the importance by attracting attention to the writing style of the character's naming.

(b) General

One of the bold features of African English, known as African-American Vernacular English (AAVE), is the use of double negative in sentences. This is the style that is brought up by Alice Walker in the novel *The Color Purple.* Another AAVE variation that can be seen from the novel *The Color Purple* is the deviation from subject – verb agreement. The missing of verbs in sentences is also found throughout this novel and it is considered as part of AAVE variation style of the novelist.

3. Context and Cohesion

(a) Cohesion

There are sentence**s** that begin with preposition, linking verbs, conjunction, and or auxiliary verbs in this novel.

2.18	**With** God help.
2.21	**And** look what happen to Ma.
2.23	**But** I ain't.
2.534	**Then** he belch.
2.2289	**But** they know who Adam is from they own point of view. **And** for a whole lot longer time ago.
2.2304	**Then** they will become the new serpent. **And** wherever a white person is found he'll be crush by somebody not white, just like they do us today. **And** some of the Olinka peoples believe life will just go on and on like this forever. **And** every million years or so something will happen to the earth and folks will change the way they look. Folks might start growing two heads one of these days, for all we know, and then the folks with one head will send 'em all someplace else. **But** some of 'em don't think like this.
2.2329	**That** she had seen the magazines we receive from home and that it was very clear to her that black people did not truly admire blackskinned black people like herself, and especially did not admire blackskinned black women.

The high frequency of AAVE usage that can be found in this novel from the specific word pronunciation: mammy for mommy, naw for no, git for get, ast for ask, suh for sir, nuff for enough, to deviations in sentences that are double negative usage in one sentence, deviation of subject – verb, and the missing of verbs in sentences, they all show the very style of Alice Walker in her novel *The Color Purple.* The using of conjunction supposedly to be in the middle of a sentence from the beginning of sentences and even paragraph are seen to stress on AAVE notion of Alice Walker style in this novel.

4.2. The regularities of style in the color purple

Alice Walker shows her style consistency in this novel. Alice Walker shows her strong style in using African-American Vernacular English in her novel *The Color Purple.* As Clarke states that one of the most highly praised aspects of The Color Purple is Walker's use of language. Celie's dialect brings the story to life, Walker's use of language, especially black idiom, is masterful and adds poignancy and depth to the narrative.

Watkins (1982: 7) in the New York Times Book Review also feels that the language choice of Walker is one of the most appealing aspects of the book. He states that some readers may initially be put off by Celie's dialect and simple way of speaking, but that after the reader accepts the dialect it assumes a lyrical cadence of its own. The cumulative effect is a novel that is convincing because of the authenticity of its folk voice.

The use of double negative that is a typical AAVE can be found throughout the novel. Especially when Cellie takes place as the narrator of the story, that is when she is in the conversation and when she writes letters to Nettie. The use of double negative has a purpose to show the social and education background of the character.

1300	DEAR CELIE,
1301	It has been a long time since I had time to write. But always, no matter what I'm doing, I am writing to you. Deaf Celie, I say in my head in the middle of Vespers, the middle of the night, while cooking, dear, dear Celie. And I imagine that you really do get my letters and that you are writing me back: dear Nettie, this is what life is like for me.
1543	DEAR NETTIE,
1544	I **don't** write to God **no** more, I write to you.
1545	What happen to God? ast Shug.
1546	Who that? I say.
1547	She look at me serious.
1548	Big a devil as you is, I say, you **not** worried bout **no** God, surely.
1549	She say, Wait a minute. Hold on just a minute here. Just because I don't harass it like some peoples us know don't mean I ain't got religion.
1550	What God do for me? I ast.

Cellie is the older sister of Nettie, yet Nettie has more chance and ability in education that in turn arise her level in social status. This higher level that Nettie gains as a result of better education results in better language use, more grammatical English, than her sister Cellie. By using double negative variation Alice shows that how language and mind style are intertwined and connecting to each other.

Another personal style Alice shows in this novel is about the missing verb that still attaches to AAVE. The missing verbs are found in many sentences in this novel. However, it is specifically used by characters that are described to be uneducated and have low social class status.

2.244	**She smart** too though, I think.
2.252	**He your daddy**.
2.253	**She in front** a little.
	She not quite as tall as Harpo but much bigger, and strong and ruddy looking, like her mama brought her up on pork.

5. Conclusion

The strong style of African American is clearly shown by Alice Walker in *The Color Purple.* It can be seen from the use of the dialect *Mammy, Naw,* and the repeatedly occurrence of double negative sentence are the perfect evidence of Alice's style in her literary work. Another obvious style that Alice shows in *The Color Purple* is the use of Mr. _____ for one of the male character. Alice uses this special name for this specific character for some reasons. One is to show that there is not just one man that can have characteristics like Mr. ____ in the world. Thus, she opts to not put any names for the character. Another reason is that she does not want to point a finger by putting name to a character. Mr. _____ also makes the novel shows a unique style for Alice Walker.

Alice Walker's style is shown through the frequent occurrences of general in lexical categories, word classes and general in grammatical categories, as well as cohesion in cohesion and context. The novel *The Color Purple* shows that there is consistency from the part of the novelist in using her thumbprint style. The consistency comes from the influence of the background of the novelist. Alice Walker shows her African background through the use of AAVE in the novel. From the four categories of stylistic, not all categories are found in the novel. This shows that personal preference as a reflection of the novelist's style is mirrored in the novel.

One implication that can be drawn from the analysis is that discourse stylistics analysis provides a basis for an appreciation for literature through linguistic perception. Walker breaks away from all the rules and seeks alternative ways of composition conforming to her content of existentialist thought. She tries to capture people's situation in its

concentrated form and employs a form which can fully take in human existence. Alice Walker reinterprets life through their signature style of writing.

Another implication is that literature plays important role in the process of nation building. Literature is a medium that connects fiction and real world by using a specific type of language style. The language style used by the novelist helps the nation building in a way that language development is one of the issues that emerge in nation building process where literary works, in this case is novels, play key role in the formation and the development of national and standard language of America.

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