

**A Stylistic Investigation on D. H. Lawrence's  
*Sons and Lovers***

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**Abstract**

*This work analyzes D.H Lawrence's Sons and Lovers using a stylistic approach to examine the various stylistic properties employed in the composition of the text. The stylistic analysis of a novel goes beyond the traditional, surface interpretation, because it combines intuition and detailed linguistic analysis of the text. The aim of the study is to provide a description of lexical and grammatical categories in the text. The research is a stylistic analysis which employs the Leech and Short (2007) checklist of linguistics and stylistic categories. The study reveals that the mode of language use forms an essential part of the meaning of a novel, making interpretation more precise and leading to a better understanding of the text. Lawrence makes subtle and effective use of complex vocabulary. His passages are often dominated by long polysyllabic words, fragmented episodes and descriptions. He employs the use of dialect and vigorous idiomatic folk language. His use of repetition is interesting because the constant employment of binary structures creates an overall effect in the text which are heavily responsible for the quality of Lawrence's prose.*

**Keywords:** *Language, Style, Text, Choices, Description.*

**Introduction**

There is an ongoing issue of linguistic autonomy of literary discourses which argues that literariness is not and cannot be the exclusive preserve of literature. Language being central to literature must be “carved” in such a way that it conveys the message it carries while appealing to the reader's mind at the same time. The focus should not be so much on using beautiful language but on using a language endowed with enough literariness as to distinguish it from ordinary language. The novel is written in prose rather than verse, although the language of novels may often strike us as

very 'poetic' on occasions. It would nonetheless be a serious mistake to assume that the language of a novel is identical to that of ordinary speech or of most non-literary writing. Even so, the fact that the novel is in prose helps to establish a sense of real life. When reading a novel, our attention is not naturally drawn to considering the language as language; the tendency is more for us to look through the language of the novel to reason out what it describes and evokes.

A prose is expected to produce a comprehensible piece of work which carries the intended message and has aesthetic value as well. This creative use of language being employed by authors and the specific patterns employed in literary work brings about interest in the study of style in literary texts. The stylistic analysis of a given text is usually an attempt at evaluating the use of language in order to unravel the synthesis of the thought in the text. Most readers do not find it easy to understand the literary text they read, this is as a result of some peculiar issues like language employed by the writer or the world view the author tries to propagate in his writing.

The narrative aspect that this study seeks to investigate is to identify the stylistic devices applied in the text and to show how such stylistic features help to enhance a better understanding of D.H Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*.

An indispensable feature of prose fiction is style. This study focuses on the style of the selected novel and the linguistic choices which are intrinsically connected with the meaning embedded in the novel. The stylistic features that the study focuses on are lexical, grammatical categories, cohesion and figures of speech. This study will be delimited to D. H Lawrence's *Sons and lovers*' and this is as a result of certain qualities which permeate his writings including power of detail, linguistic skills as a writer and realistic imagination.

### **Methodology/ Theoretical Framework**

Due to the fact that the primary interest of this study is the traditional concern of the linguist to confidently apply linguistic criteria to making critical analysis that contributes directly to literary interpretation and evaluation of any text, this study applies Leech and Short's (2007) checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories – lexical categories, grammatical categories, figure of speech and context and cohesion for analysis. Our genre for analysis is the novel. The field – prose fiction – is one in which the linguist's contribution has hitherto been relatively slight (Leech and Short 1987:3). Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* is used for this study. The text was selected for this study because the author is a renowned novelist who is acknowledged to have matched the best across generations. As such there is the need to examine his use of language for better understanding of his style using linguistic variables for according to Leech and Short “to make progress in the understanding style one has to make use of an explicit understanding of language – not just language in a literary context.” (1987:1).

Leech and Short's checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories are linguistic variables or 'apparatus of linguistic description' (Leech and Short, 1987) that can be used in analysing the style of prose text. These categories are grouped under four headings: lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, cohesion and context. These linguistic variables as posited by Leech and Short serve to enable linguist ask questions that would elicit relevant answers in order to provide meanings and interpretations that would help in evaluating relevant text.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Some researches have been done on stylistics; therefore, this section intends to review some scholarly works on language, style, stylistics, D.H Lawrence and his works.

### **G. Leech and Micheal Short**

Leech and short sees style as a relational term in the sense that we talk about the style of "X" in which case the term is used to refer to the features of language used by a writer, a period, a genre etcetera. For their purpose, they define style in relation to texts, since they are concerned with the style of texts. They see style as the linguistic characteristics of a particular text. This is because they are concerned with the study of language as used in literary texts with the aim of relating it to its artistic functions. The authors state that in the field of literary writing, the term style can be applied in various ways. It can be applied to the linguistic habits of a particular writer; in this case, one can refer to the style of Daniel Defoe i.e. authorial style. Style can also be applied to the way language is used in a particular genre (as opposed to another), a period of writing (say the Victorian age), a school of writing or a combination these, such that we talk of early 18<sup>th</sup> century style or the style of Victorian novels etcetera. Style however, is a relative term since it does not just refer to characteristics of language use but correlates these with extra linguistic factors such as context of situation.

### **Literary Stylistics**

Styles in literature are the literary elements that describe the ways that the author uses words. The author's word choice, sentence structure, figurative language and sentence arrangement all work together to establish mood, imagery, and meaning in the text. Style describes how the author describes events, objects, and ideas. The style that an author uses influences how we interpret the facts that are presented. Wordings or phrasing can tell us about emotions in the scene, the setting and characters. The type of the sentences used by the writer also tells us a lot about the situation, the speaker, and the audience. Literature has an essentially artistic quality and all art is the expression of life in form of truth and beauty. Lodge (1966:24) (quoted in Fowler) explains that, "The novelist's medium is language: whatever he does, *qua* novelist, he does in and through language." So, the language of novels is often seen as a medium through which the novelist works. This language as used in

literature is an embellishing device working to redefine other elements in fiction or “to provide a kind of separate attraction”.

Furthermore, literature offers a corpus of material for linguistic study. It is deviant in some respect from the more orthodox field of linguistic concern.

Literature is the work of writers who are especially sensitive to the language of their time and who use the skill of language to make permanent their visions of life. They manipulate language making it contain a unique series of experiences and interpretations.

### **Data presentation and Discussion**

#### **Vocabulary**

One of the fundamental elements in any novel is the writer's handling of language; the choice of words made by the writer will constitute a special effect both textual and communicative. Lawrence makes a subtle and effective use of complex range of vocabulary. He invariably uses short words, mostly monosyllabic and short lending informal and casual style of description. The following conversation takes place in the opening chapter of the novel when William was feeling very miserable because he had left his mother alone:

Has my dad been? He asked  
No said the mother.  
He's helping to wait at the moon and stars, I see him through the  
black Tin stuff wi holes in on the window, wi his sleeves rolled up.'  
Ha! Exclaimed the mother shortly. He's got no money. An he'l be  
satisfied if he gets his allowance whether they give him more or not.  
(p.6)

The use of monosyllabic words shows that both mother and son are talking very casually about the person who is not so very important in their life. Mrs Morel dismisses him with very casually uttered words, which shows that she does not really respect her husband much:

Can you go to bed mother?  
Yes, I'll come.  
Sleep with Annie, mother, not with him.  
I'll sleep in my own bed (p.267)

In this conversation, Paul confronted his father for abusing his (Paul's) mother while his father was on the verge of hitting him. The preponderance of short, terse monosyllabic words very effectively conveys the feelings and emotions of both the mother and the son, the stress and pain felt by Paul and the anger and frustration felt

by his father. This routine, casual conversation enables them to mask their feelings and regain some control over their feelings so that both are not upset by the event preceding the conversation. This casual conversation helps them to bring some semblance of normalcy to their life. The style is elevated when the occasion demands it. It all depends on the characters, the subject of discussion and the relationship that exists between them. This style becomes more prominent when the characters are more formal and indulge in a sort of sophisticated conversation. The characters use long words as part of their idiolect and register. Thus the style becomes highly formal as in the following excerpts:

It's because ...it's because there is scarcely any shadow in it; it's shimmerier, as if I'd painted the shimmering protoplasm in the leaves and everywhere, and not stiffness of the shape. That seems dead to me. Only this shimmeriness is the real living. The shape is dead crust. The shimmer is inside really (p.189).

Here, Paul is trying to impress Miriam and explain the reason for why she perhaps, likes one of his sketches. The subject, for him especially, is very close to his heart, lofty and sublime. Note the words, which are polysyllabic. The use of these words elevates the style lending it a degree of formality. Though Lawrence uses short monosyllabic words very frequently, he does also use compound words and expressions. Some of them are his own coinage and central to the theme in his novel. In the following example, Paul is discussing Clara and her marriage, with Miriam. Once again notice the long words used by Paul.

I suppose so, I suppose she had to. It isn't altogether a question of understanding: it's a question of living, with him she was only half alive; the rest was dormant, deadened. And dormant woman was the femme incomprise and she had to be awoken (p.393)

The subject was serious, the topic of discussion was Clara and her marriage and the person with whom Paul the speaker was discussing this with was Miriam, some of the words he uses are deviations from the norm. This pattern lends a weight to his prose: the compound *love-kiss* is inevitable and central to the theme. It cannot be substituted by another word; “and now this purity prevented even their first love-kiss”. Another example is the use of flower- blue in the following excerpt from the text;

Mrs. morel watched the sun sink from the glistening sky, leaving a soft flower-blue overhead, while the western space went red, as if all the fire had swum down there, leaving the bell cast flawless blue (p.45).

The term “blue” significantly refers to prosperity, peace and happiness, which are symbolized by the colour blue, the baby's eyes are blue and he was a delicate baby. Flowers stand for joy and delicacy. The expression becomes rather vivid, immediate and visual. Other examples are kindly –souled, battle pitched, pit-boots, pit clothes and pit bottle (note the repetition) the use of 'pit- trousers' in *at last he took off his pit trousers and donned decent black* (146).

In the novel, Lawrence uses special vocabulary to bring out the central ideas in his novel. This pattern of vocabulary is related to the values of life and their negation, elemental things of nature and mystical and religious aspect, concreteness, abstract and philosophical ideas, death and life, creativity and sterility, freedom and bondage, etcetera. The vocabulary of opposition and contrast reveals the despair, feeling of helplessness and misery that his central character Paul goes through in the novel. The opposition of dark and light is clearly evident and employed effectively in the novel. Light symbolizes rational, daily and is mostly strikingly associated with Mrs. Morel. Darkness symbolizes the wonder and mystery of existence as well as the human subconscious and brute instinct. This quality is exemplified in Walter Morel who descends down every day into his mines – to Lawrence, light and darkness like life and death, opened naturally into each other and were essential to one another. Darkness has a special symbolic potency. It adds tragic dignity to various scenes and symbolizes the darkness of death. When Williams' body is brought back home, the Morels solemnly guide the long, heavy casket out of dark night and into the candle lit parlour. At the end of the novel Paul walks away from the dark uninhabited country fields- towards the bright city lights.

The repetition of words like darkness, black, death, nothing and their variants has resulted in a pattern of some sort. This pattern explores forcefully Lawrence's idea and vision about life especially in the industrialized civilization. In the novel the word *dark* has been used in different contexts affecting a pattern. In the scene describing the bringing of the coffin containing William into the house, the variants of black have been used in the following words; *night, darkness, black, faintly, luminous night, obscurity, candle light*. Each of the words has been repeated several times in a very short span of time, the constant patterning of these words makes the whole scene sorrowful, and infused with an air tragedy. It describes the sorrow and despair felt in Morels' household:

Paul went to the bay window and looked out. The ash tree stood monstrous and black in front of the wide darkness. It was a faintly luminous night'... there was the noise of wheels. Outside in the darkness of the street below, Paul could see horses and a black vehicle, one lamp and a few pale faces then some men, all miners in their shirt sleeves, seemed to struggle in the obscurity' the yellow lamp of the carriage shone alone down in the black road (p.172).

At the end of the novel, the conflict in Paul's mind is brought out very effectively through contrasting patterns of life – death and light darkness. There is an implied comparison between positive and negative, optimism and pessimism, hope and despair.

On every side the immense dark silence seemed to be pressing him, so tiny a spark, into extinction, and yet, almost nothing, he could not be extinct. Night in which everything was lost, went reaching out, beyond stars and sun. Stars and sun, a few bright grains, went spinning around terror. And holding each other in embrace, here in darkness that out passed them all and left them tiny and daunted. So much, and himself, infinitesimal, at the core a nothingness and yet not nothing. Mother! He whispered, Mother!... He would not take that direction, to the darkness to follow her. He walked towards the faintly humming glowing town quickly. (p.320)

Here the vast darkness of night refers to death as Paul is in a dilemma after his mother's death. He seems to be in a very disturbed state of mind and was wondering whether to merge with the darkness along with his mother or to embrace the glowing lane of life, the lights here refer to and are symbolic to hope and life.

The word *blood* is quite interesting. He uses it in a very significant manner. Anger, passion, sexual desire, are illustrated in different characters. These are several instances where the word *blood* and its variants have been used, some of them are ; blood-shot eyes: sensuous flame of life, Morel's blood was up, even the blood, a wave of hot blood went over the infant, blood battling: roused his blood: her heart melted like a drop of fire, etcetera.

The whole of his blood seemed to burst in to flames and he could scarcely breathe...his blood was concentrated like a flame in his chest. There were flashed in the blood (p.222)

These lines refer to the passion felt for Miriam as they walked side by side. He wants to make love to Miriam but she shrinks away from it and from Paul. Blood also makes its presence felt when Mr. Morel throws an object with violence at Gertrude and some blood shedding takes place. This again is symbolic. Mrs. Morel is hurt on her brow and the blood flows and drops on the baby's white shawl. Later a drop also dropped on the baby's golden hair. The imagery is vivid, and it is also very symbolic. *Mrs. Morel's blood on her baby*. There is blood contact and a communion seems to have been established between her and baby Paul. And it is ironic that it is Mr. Morel who is responsible for drawing.



Lawrence's passages are very often dominated by long polysyllabic words when the educated middleclass characters discuss complex issues relating to spirituality, emotional crisis and abstract concepts. Lawrence has used words such as blood, cold, nature and darkness and their associated variants to bring out his central ideas and vision effectively. He also brings out the relational opposites and balance: darkness and light, love and hate, freedom and bondage, elemental things of nature and industrial aspects of society. By these words, he establishes aesthetic effects and portrays the crisis of human soul in modern society. Meanwhile, in the novel adjectives are used very abundantly both predicatively and attributively; this classification is based on the position they occupy, attributive is when the adjective is positioned just before the noun and predicative is positioned after the verb.

The use of adjective makes the prose style more vivid, colorful, forceful and appealing. In the opening chapter, Mrs. Morel is described as a small delicate and resolute woman: *A rather small woman, of delicate mold but of resolute bearing.* William is described as a *very active lad, fair-haired, freckled having blue eyes and a touch of Norwegian about him.* Mrs Morel has been described thus: *well set up, erect and very smart: wavy hair, vigorous black beard: ruddy cheeks: red moist mouth, a rich ringing laugh soft, non-intellectual, warm and satiric humour.* These words arouse readers' sense impressions, feelings and imagination. Adjectives of colour make their presence felt in a very effective manner. Vibrant colours are used to describe the flowers as well as the skies.

Nature reflects the moods of the characters and in Lawrence's description of nature is found the feelings as emotions and the psychological conflicts in the character's mind. Some examples of the adjectives of colour which add a rich imagery to this text and a sense of vividness and exactness are: white (barley) yellow (oats), red (wheat), and green (roots crops). Lawrence very effectively uses adjectives of colour when he describes nature. *Here was a yellow glow over the moving grasses and the sorrel-heads burned crimson. Gradually, as they walked along the highland, the gold in the west sank down to red, the red crimson, and then the chill blue crept against the glow (p. 197).* It contains various adverbs, which are repeated for effect and intensity, some examples are:

1. *She lingered together then, tenderly, passionately (p.12).*
2. *She loved only children and animals: children she loved passionately, but coldly (p.38).*
3. *He kissed her again and stroked the hair from her temples, gently, tenderly as if he were a lover (p.45).*
4. *Paul rather liked copying the letters but he wrote slowly, laboriously, exceedingly badly. (p.87).*



## Sentences

Syntax is the level of linguistics concerned with the structuring of sentences (Carnie 2007). Language has structures and it is not a hotchpotch of randomly distributed elements. Instead, the linguistic ingredients in language are arranged in accordance with a set of rules. Sequences of words are ordered into phrases, clauses and sentences following the conventional rules of grammar. In the analysis of syntax, the syntactic structures with reference to compound complex simple and short sentences have to be considered.

### Loosed and Periodic Sentences

Loosed sentence structure in the text makes the style natural, direct and informal: a loose sentence is also called a cumulative sentence. It usually begins with a main clause followed by phrases and or clauses that add information to the main clause:

- *I could tell my mother was upset from her tapping foot and her stern expression'(p.129)*
- *She looked up at him with her grey eyes, humiliated and lonely (p.73)*
- *Clara was happy, almost sure of him (p.300)*
- *There was a big tenderness, as after a strong emotions they had known (p.308)*
- *He was solitary and strong, and his eyes had a beautiful light (p.309)*

In loose sentence the dependent trailing constituents, which have an element of completion dominates the anticipatory constituents. These clauses do not pose much burden on the readers in deciding the information. In such a sentence, the chain ideas follow one another as the text progresses. While a periodic sentence normally holds up information towards the end, anticipatory constituents which are subordinate or dependent constituents play a major part in holding up information. The periodic sentences bring an element of suspense, tension and mystery into the syntax. This depends on the length of the anticipatory constituent. According to Leech and Short “ periodic sentences combine the principle of climax with the principle of subordinate and so progresses from a build – up tension to a final climactic point of resolution... “(p.126).The periodic sentence may contain elements of other sentence types, but unlike others, it is not grammatically complete until it reaches its full stop. The periodic sentence usually starts with the theme of the minor idea and ends with the theme of the major idea. It, therefore, keeps the reader in suspense until it unfolds in the last clause.

### Complex Sentences

D H Lawrence employs complex sentence to express the feelings and experience of characters- if we take the example of Mrs. Morel's intense experience with the tall white lilies on a full moonlight, we come across the falling sentences, *the moon was*

*high and magnificent in the August night* (subject + predicator+modifiers+adverb phrase of time). *Night* has two modifiers: *the* and *August*. The noun *Moon* has been qualified by the adjectives *high* and *magnificent*. The sentence that follows is the complex one with periodic pauses: *Mrs. Morel, seared with passion, shivered to find herself out there in a great white light that fell cold on her, and gave shock to her inflamed soul* (p.29). This complex sentence very effectively portrays Mrs. Morel's complex state of mind. It produces a dramatic effect and a feeling of suspense. Mrs. Morel is in a disturbed state of mind because of the conflicting emotions within her and the use of contrastive words like: *seared – shivered – cold- shock* and *inflamed*, intensify the experience she has undergone. A variety of punctuation marks are also used which make the text interesting coupled with a regular pattern of loose and periodic sentences:

In her arms lay the delicate baby, its blue eyes always looking at her unblinking seemed to draw her innermost thought out of her. She no longer loved her husband: she had not wanted this child to come and there it lays in her arms pulled at her heart (p.46)

These lines convey the conflict in her heart when she looked at her child which she didn't want but which now “pulled at her heart”. The first sentence contains inversion; the next sentence, a periodic sentence has the anticipatory constituent “always looking at her unblinking” preparing us for an important information, creating a dramatic effect and suspense. The profound and complex situation of love between mother and son are brought out by the accumulation of clauses and phrases. These are meaningful pauses very intentional and made prominent by appropriate punctuations.

Paul loved to sleep with his mother. Sleep is still most perfect, in spite of hygienist: when it is shared with a beloved. The warmth, the security, the peace of soul, the utter comfort from the touch of the other, knits the sleep, so that it takes the body and soul completely in its healing. Paul lay against her and slept, and got better, whilst she, always a bad sleeper, fell later on into profound sleep that seemed to give her faith (p.84)

The first sentence is simple, containing a finite and non-finite verb: loved to sleep. The next sentence consists of two clauses joined by the word group *in spite of hygienists*, the two commas in the sentence add the rhythm, *most* modifying *sleep* adds depth to the relationship.

### **The use of dialect**

Lawrence uses dialect to convey his working class character's conversation. An

example is the shift from the formal, cultured 'public school' language to the register of ordinary colloquial speech. The effect of this is to ring into juxtaposition a voice from high culture and voice from low culture providing a contrast. He uses the midland dialects, which is quite different from Standard English. This dialect often drops the beginning consonant of words and employs the old fashioned "thee" and "thou" for "you". Walter Morel speaks in dialect emphasizing his social background and his sensuality, while Gertrude speaks the Standard English of the educated middle class. Paul speaks both dialects; he uses the midlands dialect for sensuous love with sexually uninhibited Clara, for women towards whom he feels a sensual attraction. He reserves the Standard English dialect for Miriam, his work and class friend.

### **Cohesion**

Cohesion takes place through the use of various lexical and syntactical devices like syntactical parallelism, alliteration, inversion, end focus, fronting, the use of lexical sets, compounding, stylistic consistency, transformational devices, and etcetera. Various types of lexical and syntactical devices add to the cohesion and coherence in a given text. Coherence also refers to the textual aspect, which links the meaning of utterances in a discourse. Semantic features are incorporated into the text and hence one could say that a representation is an expressive process, which has two aspects: text and discourse i.e. the shape of the message and the overall weaving of the message through interaction of the author/ narrator, reader and the characters. Meaning is structured through various stylistic organizations in the language and the reader experiences the meaning in the language when he encounters various patterns and deviations in the process of his reading. According to Fowler (1977:139), "In fiction the linguistics of discourse applies most naturally to point of view, the author's stance towards his character and other element of his context towards his assumed readers"

Leech and Short (2007) consider that discursal point of view refers to the relationship expressed through the discourse structure between the implied author or some other addressor and the fiction. Situations are created to describe various incidents and thought perceptions of the characters are revealed. The writer focuses on the 'Mind style' which refers to the distinctive linguistic presentation of an individual's mental self. It generally presents a character's reflection and feelings, prejudices and values. So the mind style in this context is a realization of a narrative point of view. More narrowly still, mind style can be associated with quite some stylistic effects, for example in the description of a character or a landscape. Although we can be concerned with cumulative tendencies of stylistic choice, even a single sentence, such as "Bob Cowley's outstretched talons gripped the black –deep sounding chords." (James & Ulysses 2007) might be said to encapsulate a mind style and though it is believed to be essentially a question of semantics, it can

only be observed through formal construction of language in terms of grammar and lexis.

### Findings

Writers use language in their own ways to create beauty and meaning, they express their views, messages by the means of language. This work is an analysis of D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* using the stylistic approach to examine how various stylistic elements are used in the creation of the text as well as investigate the lexical peculiarities inherent in the text. The study employs the Leech and Short checklist of stylistic categories. It identifies the use of subtle vocabulary, unfamiliar diction, loosed and complex sentences, relational opposites- the use of narrative conjunction and cross references. As for lexical cohesion, he uses repetition to a considerable degree which is further examined under the peculiarities in the text. It was observed that the author operates with some linguistic features which are strange particularly, the use of repetition of which three levels were identified as the binary lexical structure, ternary lexical and multiple lexical structures. This style, as well as the introduction of dialect and archaic words makes the language employed more complex.

### Conclusion

The analysis reveals that Lawrence in *Sons and Lovers* makes use of metaphoric language, dialects. The writer employs the use of narrative conjunction, series of questions for stylistic effects, though each for a fairly different purpose. Also, Lawrence makes a subtle and effective use of complex range of vocabulary. Finally, the resources of language are shown to be an essential part of the meaning of the novel, making the interpretation of it more precise and leading to a better understanding of the text.

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