

A Critical Stylistic Study of Exemplifying in Walker's "The Colour Purple"

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Abstract

The current research focuses on Critical Stylistics to scrutinize how Exemplifying helps constructing ideology in ALice Walker's "The Colour Purple " (1982). Critical Stylistics has been developed from stylistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It preserves the text itself as the key evidence for interpretation. The research emphasizes the “peripheral” textual–conceptual function, Exemplifying. The research utilizes Jeffries’ (2010a) model. It combines qualitative analysis in terms of description and interpretation with simple quantitative support using IBM SPSS Statistics 20 and Excel. The selected extracts from the novel are coded for lists types and speaker patterns. The findings display that Alice Walker frequently uses Exemplifying for inference and essential concerns such as the struggle between community-control and personal-freedom and women’s-agency. Overall, Exemplifying considered in the novel as an important stylistic choice for shaping ideology particularly about community, gender-power, and personal-agency.

Keywords: (Critical stylistics, Ideology, CDA, Exemplifying).

دراسة أسلوبية نقدية للتمثيل في رواية ووكر "اللون الأرجواني"

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الملخص

يركز هذا البحث على توظيف الأسلوبية النقدية في فحص كيفية إسهام التمثيل في بناء الأيديولوجيا في رواية أليس ووكر "اللون الأرجواني" (١٩٨٢). تطوّرت الأسلوبية النقدية من تداخل الأسلوبية مع تحليل الخطاب النقدي، مع الحفاظ على النصّ نفسه بوصفه الدليل الرئيسي للتفسير. يركّز البحث على الوظيفة النصّية المفهومية الطرفية وهي التمثيل. ويعتمد البحث نموذج جيفريز (٢٠١٠)، جامعاً بين التحليل النوعي من حيث الوصف والتفسير، ودعم كميّ بسيط باستخدام IBM SPSS Statistics 20 و Excel. وقد جرى ترميز مقتطفات مختارة من الرواية وفق أنماط القوائم وأنماط المتحدثين. وتُظهر النتائج أنّ أليس ووكر تُكثر من توظيف التمثيل بوصفه أداة للاستدلال، ولإبراز قضايا محورية مثل الصراع بين ضبط المجتمع والحريّة الشخصية، ودور المرأة وتأثيرها بوجه عام، يُعدّ التمثيل في الرواية خياراً أسلوبياً مهماً في تشكيل الأيديولوجيا، ولا سيّما فيما يتّصل بالمجتمع، وسلطة النوع الاجتماعي، والدور الفرديّة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: (الأسلوبيات النقدية، تحليل الخطاب النقدي، الايديولوجية، التمثيل).

1. Introduction

Critical stylistics (henceforth CS) has developed as a response to the increasing relevance of critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA), particularly in understanding how language conveys ideology. Although CDA and stylistics share a common foundation, Roger Fowler being a prominent figure in both these fields have gradually diverged over time. Jeffries and McIntyre (2010) emphasize that "the fundamental foundation of all stylistics remains the text itself." This new branch of stylistics aims to

uphold this foundational principle while demonstrating that stylistic analysis can offer valuable insights into nonfiction texts, just as it does with literary works. In fact, the emergence of a specific ideological or "critical" stylistics underscores that the analytical tools necessary for different types of text analysis are essentially similar. Regardless of the form, be it poetry, novels, journalistic articles, or political manifestos, texts generate meaning in fundamentally comparable ways.

This research focuses on analyzing Exemplifying in Alice Walkker's "The Colour Purple". "The Colour Purple", is a novel written by American author Alice Walker, published in 1982. It is considered a classic of contemporary American literature and has won numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. "The Colour Purple" also explores themes of race, gender, sexuality, and the power of self-discovery and resilience. It is known for its powerful and lyrical prose, as well as its exploration of the African American experience in the rural South during a challenging period in American history.

It is a challenging but rewarding read that invites readers to grapple with its themes and characters on multiple levels.

2.The Statement of the Problem

This study examines peripheral forms in literary works. It is assumed that the subject has not acquired enough attention from researchers, particularly from a critical stylistic perspective. Therefore, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, not every sentence or text will include Exemplifying . this peripheral textual-conceptual functions, nevertheless, can be the most interesting cases in analyzing the ideation of a text, so its peripheral nature is quantitative rather than qualitative.

The major problem is the lack of detailed examination of peripheral forms in literary works, particularly from a critical stylistic perspective. Despite their significance in analyzing ideation in texts, this peripheral textual-conceptual function has not been sufficiently explored by major frameworks, leading to a gap in understanding their role and impact in literary analysis. Within the research problem, the study tries to answer the following research questions:

1. How does Alice Walker employed Exemplifying to convey her ideologies in "The Colour Purple"?
2. How is Exemplifying used to reveal Walker's stylistic choices?

3.Literature Review

3.1 Style as a Choice

The manner that is used by writers or speakers in specific genre is called style. It is purposeful for scholars to make their works distinct and interpretable (Leech & Short, 2007). However, scholars differ in their interpretations of this concept. Broadly speaking, style encompasses both spoken and written language, as well as literary and everyday communication. In literary contexts, it may refer to an author's distinctive linguistic approach, such as Dickensian style, or to the characteristics of a particular genre, period, or literary movement, as seen in terms like epistolary style or early eighteenth-century style (Leech & Short, 2007). The word "style" comes from the Latin term "stilus,". It refers to a short and flattened stick that Romans used to write on wax tablets. Currently, this term is used in numerous different contexts. they make its meaning slightly vague (Tayeva&Orazbekova,2020).Wales(2011) points out that style is understood through various fields, including translation studies, literary criticism, sociolinguistics, and stylistics. As a result, it is linked to several disciplines and can be defined in numerous ways.

Leech and Short (1981,p.11) define style as “the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on.” This means that style is not limited to the writing of a specific author; it can also reflect the characteristics of a situation, a character, a particular text, or a specific linguistic expression that is examined over time. Therefore, style is the linguistic choices made by writers in which readers realize them without any integration (Jabbar & Ubeid,2021,p.33).

3.2. Why Critical Stylistics

CDA faced criticism for its theoretical clarity, interpretative practices and methodology. However it is valued for its focus on interdisciplinary as well as how language shapes power and ideology in a society(Hassan, 2019). CS in response is developed as a more systematic alternative. Unlike CDA which lacks consistent linguistic toolkit,Jeffries(2010)notes that CS connects approaches from stylistics, critical linguistics (CL), and CDA. It offers a more comprehensive analytical model. Widdowson(2004)critiques CDA for "producing partial or subjective interpretations by selectively focusing on certain textual features." whileCS stresses objectivity through text-based-analysis(Jeffries,2010). Jeffries (2010a,p.1) also points out that CDA tends to "prioritize vague contextual elements over structured linguistic tools, whereas CS focuses on how language itself encodes ideology and guides readers toward certain viewpoints" (Jeffries,2014).

Additionally, since CDA often follows Fairclough’s three-stage model of description, interpretation, and explanation, CS concentrates primarily on the first two stages (Jeffries, 2010). Moreover, the term "critical" in CDA often implies a "Marxist or socialist stance", though in CS it denotes the systematic effort to expose ideological effects in any type of text (Jeffries,2014).

CS and CDA are two powerful analytical frameworks that have emerged from the intersection of linguistics, cultural studies, and social

theory (Melrose, 1996). While they share common roots, each has developed its unique approach to analyzing language, ideology, and power relations (Qassim & Ubeid,2017,p.2). CS focuses on the subtle ways language constructs meaning and ideology within texts, regularly through detailed stylistic analysis. CDA emphasizes the broader social and political contexts in which discourse is produced and interpreted. These differences highlight the complementary nature of the two frameworks, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of how language shapes and is shaped by societal power dynamics (Ahmed, 2022). CS aims to "assemble the main general functions that a text has in representing reality" (Jeffries, 2010,p.14). it is considered as a development of CDA in terms of both theory and methodology (Jeffries,2007,2010a). One of the main criticisms of CDA is that it has not yet developed a full inventory of tools for the analyst to work with. CS attempts to counter this by introducing a systematic model of analysis which merges tools from stylistics and critical linguistics in order to uncover the linguistic choices of text producers and their possible ideological implications(Jeffries,2007,2010). She offers a Critical Stylistic framework that "combines the text analysis of stylistics with the ideological awareness of CDA" in order to uncover the hidden meaning of texts by using linguistic features.

(Jeffries & McIntyre,2010,p.94)

The toolkit that is provided by Jeffries is not completely new. it is a collection of previous tools that are used by critical discourse analyst, Fairclough (1989),critical linguists Fowler (1991) and Simpson(1993). She also adds new tools which work in a similar way to the more traditional tools such as "transitivity, presupposition , implicatures and modality" (Jeffries,2010,p.15). CS toolkit differs from the previous CDA and critical linguistic tools in that the tools are presented in the form of a list of functions that may be represented by more than one linguistic feature. The

reason behind this is to overcome "the lack of form-function mapping"(p.15) as in CDA and its forerunner CL.

3.3. Critical stylistics

This section is divided into two parts: the first explains the emergence of (CS) as a development by Jeffries in response to CDA and the lack of clear methodology. The second part compares CS and CDA, showing that while both address language and ideology, CS offers a more systematic, text-based toolkit, whereas CDA draws from multiple disciplines and is less focused on detailed linguistic analysis.

3.4. The Emergence of CS

Critical Stylistics (CS) is a recent development of CDA and stylistics. It was firstly used by (Jeffries, 2007) in her book "Textual Construction of the Female Body: A Critical Discourse Approach". It was formally established in(2010a) within the publication of Jeffries' "Critical Stylistics: The Power of English". Jeffries (2014) points out that her approach is developed as a "reaction to the rise of CDA as an increasingly influential approach to ideology in language". It attempts to answer "a feeling of frustration in the face of CDA deliberate lack of methodology or framework and its apparent abandonment of many of the achievements of linguistics in its scientific phase of development (Jeffries, 2014,p.408-409) In general, CS is realized as"mainstream text-based stylistics with a particular (critical) purpose" (Jeffries, 2016,p.159). therefore, it is principally developed by Lesley Jeffries (2007, 2010a), and built on the foundations of CDA by employing detailed linguistic analysis to reveal the connections between language, ideology, and power (Fairclough, 1989).

Simpson (1993) explains that text-producers regularly practice stylistic choices to deliver specific meaning though concealing others. These stylistic choices can only be understood fully by the analysis of language beyond its surface. Widdowson(1998)emphasizes the idea that CS

aims at uncovering the ideological aspects of texts. This happens via several systematic techniques that are drawn on critical linguistics and Halliday's social semiotics.

Norgaard, et.al (2010) note that CS is appreciated for understanding how social meanings can be built through language, and, it shares goals with Simpson's(1993)idea of stylistics. Though CDA is often seen as a broader framework encompassing both CS and critical linguistics, the three are closely connected in their focus on uncovering hidden ideologies in texts.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Research Design

A critical stylistic analysis will be used to analyse the data that has been gathered. The critical tool framework is connected to Jeffries stylistic analysis (2010a). this tool will be used with some illustratively representative extracts from the novel. On the other hand, statistical analysis will be carried out with the intention of quantitatively validating the findings of the stylistic analysis. The analytical model of the study implies the analysis incorporates several levels of moves. It will begin by highlighting the linguistic components of Exemplifying in the chosen novel. It will thereafter broaden to include qualitative analysis including description and interpretation. In this analysis, the study focuses on Exemplifying in reference to Jefferies's model. Yet, this does not presuppose that all these forms are available within the data being analyzed.

4.2. Genre

The novel belongs to the genre of African-American literature. The data to be analyzed in this study are extracts from this novel where the characters are the only speakers. This does not mean that there is no interaction between them. The participants in interaction are often characterized as being competitive and diverse.

4.3. Length

The "Colour Purple" is nearly 290 pages but varies by edition. It is composed of 90 short letters. These letters are written by Celie to Nettie. The extracts under study vary in length. Their length ranges from one to about four lines. This characteristic enables the characters to make use of all what they have to achieve their goals.

4.4. Data Collection

The selected novel under scrutiny is Walker's "The Colour Purple". It is not divided into chapters. Instead, it is organized into a series of letters. This style is called an epistolary narration. The narrative sequence is extended through these letters and the perspectives of the characters. The novel is structured in this unique way, with the letters and entries spanning the entire book, rather than being divided into chapters as in many other novels. This letter-based structure allows the story to progress while maintaining a personal and intimate tone as Celie and other characters share their thoughts and experiences.

Since the novel is lengthy, it is important to note that unbiased illustrative representative extracts will be analyzed because it is not possible to analyse all of the data that has been collected. The aforementioned novel serves as the source for the information gathered. To find those forms relevant to the subject of the current study, all extracts that convey Exemplifying would be looked for. The following steps will be taken in the present study:

1. Reading the novel allows for the isolation of certain forms that illustrate ideology and textual meaning.
2. The highlighted extracts are subsequently examined and analyzed qualitatively and coded in accordance with the units of analysis.
3. A Descriptive statistical analysis will be performed after quantifying each unit of analysis.
4. Some statistical software and tools will be utilised to statistically analyze the data under consideration and respond to the research questions.

IBM SPSS Statistics20 and Microsoft Excel 2010 are among the statistical applications.

4.5. Model of Analysis

Jeffries (2010a) explores the subtleties of exemplifying and enumerating in more detail, and Jeffries (2007) shows the potential ideological consequences of listing choices in relation to the textual construction of the female body in women's magazines.

Jeffries (2007,p.120) shows how exemplification, like equivalence, relies on generic categories and their specific instances. While often used in educational contexts, exemplification can also construct categories in a way that shapes meaning and ideology within a text. The text highlights how this function overlaps with equivalence and contrast but also serves a unique purpose providing elaboration, detail, and concrete examples to expand on broader concepts.

Healthier choices, like fruit. (Best Diet Now)

STDs, especially Chlamydia. (Woman)

There appears to be an assumption in such examples that the reader will know the rest of the list, or that the most important one is mentioned anyway (2007,p.121).

Jeffries (2010a,p.71) scrutinizes the distinction between enumeration, exemplification, and apposition. While apposition implies equivalence between elements, enumeration and exemplification present distinct items or representative examples. However, some cases blur these boundaries, making interpretation context-dependent.

"With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day."

The example above from Martin Luther King on 28 August 1963 demonstrates how listing can reinforce a central idea rather than simply

enumerate distinct actions. His repetition of similar concepts emphasizes solidarity, a technique comparable to "elegant variation" in literature (2010a,p.72).

4.6 Data Analysis

This section introduces some representative illustrative extracts gathered from the novel. The analysis carried out by two stages, description and interpretation. While Fairclough's CDA model includes description, interpretation, and explanation, CS is primarily concerned with the first two stages. It analyses the linguistic features of texts (description) and examines how these features shape readers' interpretations. The third stage, explanation, which requires a sociological analysis of discourse practices, lies beyond the scope of CS and is therefore not the focus of the present study. The following extracts are chosen from the novel as representative illustrative ones because the remaining extracts almost carry the same linguistic features.

Extracts (1): "... Inside there are stalls filled with cloth, hurricane lamps and oil, mosquito netting, camp bedding, hammocks, axes and hoes and machetes and other tools." (Walker, 1982,p.135).

At the level of description, Nettie builds a long noun-phrase list of commodities ("cloth...lamps...mosquito...netting...hammocks...axes...hoes...machetes"), linked by commas and heavy polysyndeton ("and... and... and..."), then ends with the open-end tag "and other tools," which linguistically signals that the set is representative rather than complete. In interpretation, this exemplifying list works like a quick ethnographic sweep. the market is made legible through selected objects associated with survival, mobility, and labor. Ideologically, the sampling invites the reader to infer abundance and variety, but also frames the African setting through a utilitarian lens what is foregrounded is what can be bought, carried, used, and worked with. The repeated "and" can feel breathless, producing a sense

of overflow that supports a narrative of a dense, materially busy port economy. Walker is also pushes the readers by the phrase “other tools” to look at the world from defferent perspective that clearly put Nettie in distal audience.

Extracts (2): “I sop up ham gravey and splosh my eggs in with my grits” (Walker, 1982,p.50).

This extract shows small and sensory list of food items in dialectal spelling such as "... ham,gravey, eggs, and grits". This list of food is tied with "and" with clear verbs like "..sop....splosh". the exemplifying give as clear picture of eating and not an invitation of a full meal. This gives the interpretation that the list given is built upon personified proximity that food has become routine, comfortable, and a moment of agency in a life frequently denies control. Ideologically, the detail confirms Black domestic life as worthy of literary attention everyday nutrition becomes discourse. Readers can infer additional food and extra routine outside what is named. this normalizes Celie’s world rather than exoticizing it. The concreteness of “ham” and “grits” simultaneously traces culture and class by suggesting a limited but expressive desires.

Extracts (3): “I been scared, he say. Scared. And he cover up his eyes with his hands.” (Walker, 1982,p.50).

At the descriptive level fear is rendered through repetition (“scared... Scared.”) and a single physical example by covering the eyes with hands. This is exemplifying because the gesture is one illustrative sign of emotion and not a complete description of all fear performances. the line can be interpreted by showing weakness surfacing in a figure usually associated with power. the gesture is functioning as a metonymy. Hiding the eyes stands for being unable to face consequences or truth. Ideologically, the exemplifying cue invites readers to infer the larger emotional world that the character cannot articulate directly fear becomes something bodily rather

than rhetorical. The simplicity also reflects the communicative economy of trauma. Language is occasional consequently the body “speaks.” This challenges hardened masculinity this shows that control can collapse into child-like concealment.

Extracts (4): “White women... laughing... holding they beads... dancing on top of motocars. Jumping into fountains.”

(Walker, 1982,p.49).

At the descriptive level, Celie provides a sequence of vivid participial clauses and short sentences, such as "laughing, holding the beads, dancing on cars, jumping into fountains". These items are linked loosely rather than as a closed catalogue. It makes it exemplifying. Celie selects striking images from the magazine rather than listing everything. In interpretation, these examples construct “white women” through vision, leisure, and public freedom. This is contrasted implicitly with Celie’s controlled life. Ideologically, the exemplifying list achieves social comparison. whiteness appears as mobility, play, and unapologetic visibility. The readers are invited to infer more acts of freedom beyond what is named. This enlarges the gap in what Celie feels. Together, this list discloses the magazine’s own ideology. that marketing an image of femaleness is tied to consumption and show. Thus, Celie’s exemplifying develops a criticism of mediated white females.

Extracts (5):“...boys... knickers... and... girls... garlands of flowers...” (Walker, 1982,p.122).

In description, Nettie structures a two-part style list split by gender: boys wear “knickers” and girls wear “garlands of flowers.” The constructions mark the items as examples of a trend rather than an exhaustive style guide. In interpretation, the exemplifying list encodes cultural modernity and urban identity Harlem is represented through visible markers of style. Ideologically, it can celebrate Black urban creativity and

self-fashioning . it can also hint at the pressure to perform modernity through appearance.

Extracts (6): “...and such things as ships and coal fires and streetlights and oatmeal...” (Walker, 1982,p.201).

In description, the phrase “such things as” explicitly marks what follows as a sample, and the list uses repeated “and” to string together modern objects and experiences (“ships... coal fires... streetlights... oatmeal”). The ellipsis confirms that the list is open-ended. In interpretation, Nettie is compressing “the rest of the world” into symbolic marks of industrial modernity and everyday life. Ideologically, the exemplifying function constructs a hierarchy of worlds. Modernism is named over infrastructure and consumption by inference some places that are positioned as lacking these “things.”

Extracts (7): “I think of killing, being hit by a truck, struck by lightening, lingering disease.” (Walker, 1982,p.215).

Celie gives a list of four items. These items exemplifies death. She mixes the agency of death with the accident of "truck and lightening". She also shows slow suffering in the phrase "lingering disease". therefore, the extract functions exemplifying fears instead of a complete list. In interpretation, the list externalizes anxiety. Danger comes from people, technology, nature, and the threat is everywhere. Ideologically, the examples connect a life shaped by insecurity . Even “ordinary” modernity "a truck" becomes deadly in imagination. The shift across categories also suggests that Celie’s fear is not rationally bounded. It is a generalized condition produced by lived violence. The openness encourages the readers to infer additional threats. The latter makes her world feel structurally unsafe and not just personally unlucky.

4.7. Data Discussion

The table below shows a descriptive results. It reveals that the length of the list average is 4.00 items per-extract. This can be applied for most of the examples that are available within the novel. The means that Walker's stylizes her examples in compressed sampling instead of long ones. The median also shows 4 which indicates that four examples is the regular and not just a haphazard long lists. Moreover, the spread (Std. Dev-2.52) is clear. This explains that exemplifying is flexible in the novel. The maximum value which is 9 items are shown in the table. This arises in Nettie's market description This also proves that Walker uses sometimes simple examples and heavy one sometimes.

The analysis points out that Nettie's lists are longer than Celie's. The former's mean is 5.00. While the latter is 3.25. On the one hand, Nettie's exemplifying is broader because she looks externally at the surrounding environment. Her variation (Std. Dev-3.61) is higher, which means the lists provides are variable among extracts. Celie, on the other hand, has lists (Std. Dev.-1.50) that are shorter and more stable. Therefore, unlike Nettie her exemplifying are closer to real daily life. These finding are displayed in the following table:

Table(1): Descriptive Statistics for List Length

Grouping level	Category	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	Median
Overall	Total	7	4.00	2.52	1	9	4
By Function	Exemplifying	7	4.00	2.52	1	9	4
By Speaker	Celie	4	3.25	1.50	1	4	4
By Speaker	Nettie	3	5.00	3.61	2	9	4

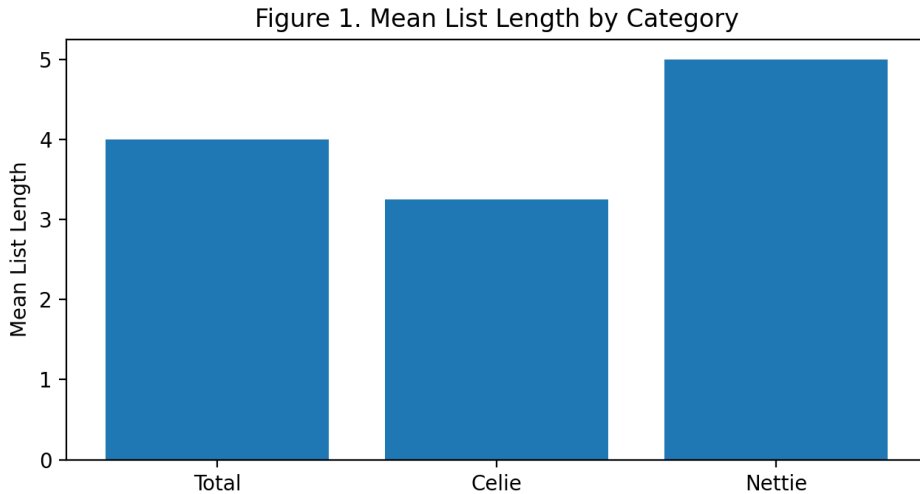


Figure 1. Mean List Length by Category

5. Conclusion

Exemplifying in Walker's "The Colour Purple" is stylistic strategy and not just a mere habit of giving lists for things, objects or people. This shows that exemplifying aids Walker, ideologically, in shaping how readers realize race, gender, class and power relations. A sense of modernity and a hierarchical status can be built through the act of listing. Moreover, exemplifying may humanize the life of black people in terms of bodily intimacy and normal aspects. In addition and most importantly, inference can be guided by exemplifying. This leads the reader to constructing a reality that is wider than the lists. It is a key tool for shaping ideologies in the novel in relationships with social control, gender authority and agency. Together, these ideologies prove Walker's essential concerns such as the struggle between community-control and personal-freedom and women's agency.

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