Stylistic Analysis of the Story *My Son the Fanatic* by Hanif Kureishi

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Abstract

The current research provides a stylistic analysis of Hanif Kureishi's short story My Son the Fanatic. It investigates the clash between a traditional father-son relationship and the son's newfound faith, which causes a rift between the two. The story further explores themes of identity, cultural displacement, and generational conflict. This research uses stylistic devices to examine the narrative structure, point of view, and use of language to convey meaning. It discusses the use of metaphor, allusions, anaphora, parallelism, and personification to represent the father's struggle to come to terms with the changes in his son's life. Additionally, the research explores how Kureishi's use of regional dialect and cultural references contributes to characterising the father-son relationship and the power dynamics at play. Through this stylistic analysis, the research demonstrates how Kureishi's story effectively explores the complexities of identity and cultural displacement in a globalised world. It is recommended that further studies focus on the broader socio-political context of the story and compare Kureishi's stylistic approach with other works exploring similar themes to gain deeper insights into the representation of cultural conflicts and identity struggles.

Introduction

Stylistics can be defined as the study of different styles that are present in the text or the utterance of the character. Stylistics as a sub-discipline came in the second half of the twentieth century. *My Son the Fanatic* is a short story written by Hanif Kureishi. It is the story of a Pakistani father, Parvez and his son, Ali, and their different perspectives on life. Parvez is a taxi driver who has adopted the British way of life, while his son is an extremist who is devoted to a fanatical version of Islam. The story explores the conflict between the two characters and their differing views on religion and culture. In this stylistic analysis, the study examines how Hanif Kureishi uses language, imagery and other literary devices to present the contrasting perspectives of Parvez and Ali (Kureishi, 2013).

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Research Problem

The main problem in this story is the clash between Parvez's modern outlook on life and Ali's conservative, fanatical beliefs. Parvez is an immigrant who has embraced British culture and values, while Ali is devoted to a strict interpretation of Islam. This clash of values is explored throughout the story and provides the central conflict between the two characters.

This study aims to analyse the use of language and literary devices in *My Son the Fanatic* by Hanif Kureishi and to explore the contrasting perspectives of Parvez and Ali.

Research Objectives

The research objectives for the study are:

1. To identify the use of stylistic elements within the story *My Son the Fanatic*.
2. To examine the use of stylistic elements such as parallelism, anaphora, allusion, metaphor and personification in the story.

Research Questions

This study is based on the following questions:

1. Which stylistic elements are used within the story *My Son the Fanatic*?
2. How are stylistic elements such as parallelism, anaphora, allusion, metaphor and personification used in the story?

The study analyses the use of figurative language, such as similes, metaphors, and personification, to illustrate the differences between Parvez and Ali. Kureishi's use of figures of speech is a key element in his writing style and helps to bring the characters and the story to life. His use of similes, metaphors and personification helps to create vivid imagery. The emphasized figures of speech help to bring *My Son the Fanatic* to life and make it an engaging and thought-provoking story.

The significance of this research is to assist readers in making meaningful interpretations of the text and to broaden readers' knowledge and awareness about language. This research aims to make clarity within a text to engage the reader. It also allows the reader to have a greater understanding and ability to imagine the situations being described in the writing. Finding a good text to work with for stylistics can be difficult. This is because there are so many different types of stylistics, and each has its own set of rules that must be followed.

Literature Review

The story was set in London, and the narrative followed Parvez as he attempted to understand his son's sudden transformation. He visited a local mosque and spoke to a religious leader to gain insight into his son's behaviour. Parvez's journey of discovery revealed the stark contrast between his own assimilated lifestyle and the fundamentalist interpretation of Islam that his son had adopted (Arslan et al., 2023). The story also touched on themes of alienation and exclusion. Parvez, who lived in Britain for many years, still felt like an outsider and was unable to connect with his son.

The research highlighted the critical acclaim that *My Son the Fanatic* received for its exploration of complex and timely themes (Mirza & Neelam et al., 2022). The story was praised for its nuanced depiction of the cultural divide between Parvez and Ali and the tension between traditional and modern values. Kureishi's story was also praised for its insight into the experience of cultural alienation and exploration of the clash between religious fundamentalism and secular life.

Leech and short model of stylistic analysis: Stylistics, a critical approach which analyses literary texts by using methods and findings of linguistics, developed in the twentieth century and aimed to show how the linguistic features of a literary text work, such as use of particular words and sentence structures (lexical and syntax choices) contribute to its overall meanings and effects (Barry, 2013). The stylistic analysis of the given story was carried out using the checklist of stylistic categories proposed by Leech & Short (2007). There are four general headings under which the following categories are placed.

Lexical Categories

The five lexical categories are Noun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, and Preposition. They carry meaning, and words with a similar (synonym) or opposite meaning (antonym) can be found. Frequently, the noun is said to be the name of a person, place, or thing and the verb is said to be an event or act.

Noun

A noun is a name of a person, place, thing, or idea. Examples include: Man, Butte College, house and happiness.

A noun is a word that refers to a person, place, thing, or idea. Nouns are often used with an article (the, a, an), but not always. Proper nouns always start with a capital letter; common

nouns do not. Nouns can be singular or plural, concrete or abstract. Nouns show possession by adding apostrophe (`s). Nouns can function in different roles within a sentence; for example, a noun can be a subject, direct object, indirect object, subject complement, or object of a preposition. The young **girl** brought me a very long letter from the teacher and quickly disappeared.

Verb

A verb expresses an action, a state of being or occurrence. Examples: Jump, is, write and become.

The verb in a sentence expresses an action or a state of being. A main verb can stand alone or can be used with one or more helping verbs in a sentence. (She can sing. 'Sing' is the main verb; can is the helping verb.) A verb must agree with its subject in number (singular or plural). Verbs also take different forms to express tense.

The young girl **brought** me a very long letter from the teacher, and then she quickly **disappeared**.

Adjective

An adjective modifies or describes a noun or a pronoun. i.e pretty, old, blue, smart etc.
An adjective is a word used to modify or describe a noun or a pronoun. It usually answers the question of which one, what kind, or how many. (Articles [a, an, the] are usually classified as adjectives.)

The **young** girl brought me a very **long** letter from the teacher, and then she quickly disappeared.

Adverb

An adverb modifies or describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb i.e. gently, extremely, carefully, well etc.

An adverb describes or modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb, but never a noun. It usually answers the questions of when, where, how, why, under what conditions, or to what degree. Adverbs often end in -ly.

The young girl brought me a **very** long letter from the teacher, and **then** she **quickly** disappeared.

Preposition

A preposition is a word placed before a noun or pronoun to form a phrase modifying another word in the sentence. i.e. by, with, about, until etc.

(by the tree, with our friends, about the book, until tomorrow)

A preposition is a word placed before a noun or pronoun to form a phrase modifying another word in the sentence. Therefore, a preposition is always part of a prepositional phrase. The prepositional phrase almost always functions as an adjective or as an adverb.

The young girl brought me a very long letter **from the teacher,** and then she quickly disappeared.

Grammatical Categories

The term "grammatical category" refers to specific properties of a word that can cause that word and/or a related word to change in form for grammatical reasons (ensuring agreement between words).

For example, the word "boy" is a **noun**. Nouns have a grammatical category called "**number**". The values of numbers are **singular** (one) and **plural** (two or more).

1. The boy **is** playing.
2. The boys **are** playing.

In sentence 1, "boy" is in its basic form, giving its "number" the value of singular. There is one boy and the related auxiliary verb "to be" is in the singular form (is).

In sentence 2, the form of "boy" has changed to "boys", giving its "number" the value of plural. There is more than one boy and the related "to be" is in the plural form (are).

In the above example, the "number" of "boys" influences the form of a boy and also influences the form of a related word (be). "Number" is a "grammatical category".

Figures of Speech

A figure of speech is a creative use of language to generate an effect. Some figures

of speech, like metaphor, simile, and metonymy, are found in everyday language. Others, like antithesis, circumlocution, and puns, require more practice to implement in writing.

Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds right next to each other, which creates a memorable or melodic effect. Example: She sells seashells by the seashore.

Antithesis

Antithesis is a literary technique that places opposite things or ideas next to one another to draw out their contrast. Example: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times . . ." —Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities

Apostrophe

Apostrophe as a figure of speech is when a character addresses someone or something that isn't present or cannot respond. The character might speak to someone deceased, an inanimate object, or a concept. Example: "O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" —William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet

Circumlocution

Circumlocution is the use of a purposely wordy description. You can think of it as talking in circles. Example: In the Harry Potter series, most characters don't say Lord Voldemort's name; instead, they use this circumlocution: "He Who Must Not Be Named."

Epigram

An epigram is a clever and memorable statement. You will find epigrams in speeches, poetry, and at the front of a book. Example: "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." —Eleanor Roosevelt

Euphemism

A euphemism is a way to say something in an understated manner, often to avoid difficult topics—like money, death, or sex. Example: Death can be an uncomfortable subject, so we've developed many euphemisms to avoid confronting it head-on. Rather than telling a friend that a relative died, you might say they "kicked the bucket," "passed away," or are "no longer with us."

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a deliberate exaggeration that adds emphasis, urgency, or excitement to a statement.

Example: If I don't eat soon, I'm going to die of hunger.

Irony

Irony is a situation that subverts a reader's expectations. Example: One of the characters in your story is a hypochondriac, always convinced that they have an exotic and incurable disease. An ironic ending for that character would be if they died of a common cold.

Litotes

Litotes use a double negative to create a positive. Example: You're not wrong.

Metaphor

A metaphor is the direct comparison of dissimilar things to create more vivid imagery or understanding. Example: He was an onion; to understand him, she had to peel back the layers.

Metonymy

Metonymy is a literary device in which a word or object stands in for a closely related word or object. Metonymy gives a writer more variability with descriptions. Example: I thought his movies were better when they weren't so Hollywood.

Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is a word that sounds like what it means. Example: When a character is exasperated, they might exclaim, "Sheesh!" That's both a word to show exasperation and a sound that happens when you sigh loudly.

Oxymoron

An oxymoron is a phrase that uses two contradictory words to create a new meaning. Example: That strawberry cake was awfully good.

Paradox

A paradox is a statement that appears to contradict itself but contains some truth, theme, or

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humour. Example: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."
—George Orwell, Animal Farm

Personification

Personification is assigning human attributes to nonhuman things. Example: The floorboards groaned under the weight of each step.

Pleonasm

Pleonasm is the use of more words than necessary to convey meaning. A writer might use pleonasm for humour or emphasis, or they might not realise they're using extra words at all. Example: The burning fire warmed the whole house.

Pun

A pun is a form of wordplay that purposely substitutes words that sound similar but have different meanings. Example: "'Mine is a long and a sad tale!' said the Mouse, turning to Alice and sighing. 'It is a long tail, certainly,' said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail; 'but why do you call it sad?'" —Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

Simile

A simile compares two dissimilar things using "like" or "as." A simile aims to give the reader a vivid understanding of something. Example: It was the first real day of summer, and by the time she came back indoors, she was as red as a tomato.

Synecdoche

Synecdoche is when a smaller unit is used to signify a larger unit or vice versa. Example: New England won the game by a touchdown. (Here, New England means New England's football team.)

Understatement

Understatement is the intentional downplaying of a situation. This can create a humorous or deadpan effect in writing. Example: "I have to have this operation. It isn't very serious. I have this tiny little tumour on the brain.

sCohesion and Context

Cohesion refers to the many ways in which the elements of a text are linked together (grammatical, lexical, semantic, metrical, alliterative). Cohesion differs from coherence in that a text can be internally cohesive but be incoherent – that is, makes no sense. Here is a text that is grammatically and lexically cohesive, but not very coherent: *An octopus is an air-filled curtain with seven heads and three spike-filled fingers, which poke in frills and furls at ribbon-strewed buttons.*

History

Style is "a selection from a total linguistic repertoire that constitutes a style… style can be applied to both spoken and written, both 'literary' and 'everyday' varieties of language; but by tradition, it is particularly associated with written literary texts" (Leech & Short, 2007, pp. 9-10). Hence, stylistics as a branch of linguistics concerns itself with analysing style, i.e. the way language is used and the purpose and effect it achieves.

Salient Features

(i) They describe technical aspects of the language of a text and use this data in interpretation.

(ii) In some cases, linguistics analysis aims to support an existing reading or intuitions of a literary text.

(iii) In other cases, the purpose is to establish a new reading, which may be based only on linguistic data and may challenge existing readings.

(iv) The technical account of how meanings are made in literature demystifies the uniqueness of literary text with an ineffable, mystical core beyond analysis, thus making it a part of the common 'universe of discourse' subject to linguistic analysis like other discourses**.**

(v) Stylistics moves beyond sentence grammar to text grammar (discourse) to show how the text works as a whole to achieve (or not) its purposes, such as to amuse, to create suspense, or to persuade. (Leech & Short, 2007, p. 207)

My Son the Fanatic has been studied by scholars in various disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, postcolonial studies, and cultural studies. Scholars have examined how the story reflects the experience of immigrants in Britain and the complexities of cultural identity (Opoka, 2022; Alzouabi, 2022). The story has been seen as a representation of the struggle between East and West and the clash between traditional and modern values. Scholars have also explored the representations of gender, race, and religion in the story and how these themes intersect.

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Research Methodology

Stylistics is a branch of literary criticism that focuses on analysing literary style and language (Stockwell, 2020). To analyse Hanif Kureishi's short story *My Son the Fanatic,* a stylistic approach was taken, utilising the heuristic checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories developed by Leech and Short (Atu et al., 2022). This analysis examined the linguistic features foregrounded by deviation from the traditional rules of language code (Wadi & Jamsheer, 2021). The stylistic analysis of the text also considered the context and discourse of the story to understand how the characters and their actions interacted with the setting and each other. The stylistic analysis also considered the themes and motifs of the narrative to understand how they were conveyed through the use of language and figures of speech (Johnson & Mercer, 2019). Therefore, the analysis considered the narrative structure and how it contributed to the story's overall meaning. Hanif Kureishi's short story employs linguistic and stylistic techniques to effectively portray the characters and their relationships in a multi-faceted manner (Klímová, 2016). The story is written in a mixture of English and Pakistani languages, which implies a cultural distance between Parvez and Ali. Kureishi uses this language to create a feeling of tension and alienation, which is further emphasised when Parvez speaks to Ali in English and Ali responds in Pakistani.

Data Collection

The current research was carried out using the qualitative research method. The purpose of the researchers was to investigate the in-depth view to find out the figure of speech in a short story.

In Leech and Short Model (2007), there are a lot of categories, i.e. lexical categories, grammatical categories, figure of speech, cohesion and context but the present study is delimited to the level of figures of speech by Leech and Short's Checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories.

The method of data collection is secondary. This is because the data has been gathered from the short story *My Son the Fanatic* to review the structure, point of view and language used to convey the meaning by the writer.

Findings

Parallelism

Parvez is a taxi driver and an overseas Pakistani living in England. He is also a father to a son, Ali, who is slowly drifting away from his cultural identity and heritage and is

attempting to embrace the new culture he finds himself in. Parvez is left struggling to answer the question of where his son's loyalty lies.

On one hand, Parvez is a father who wants to keep his son close to his cultural identity and heritage, while on the other hand, he is a taxi driver who has uprooted himself from his homeland in search of a better life in England.

Similarly, Ali finds himself between two cultures, unable to find an identity that suits him. On the other hand, he is loyal to his cultural identity and heritage, but on the other hand, he is drawn towards the Western culture he finds himself in.

Anaphora

Parvez is a father struggling to maintain the cultural heritage of his family while trying to make a better life for himself in England. He is determined to keep his son, Ali, close to his cultural identity and heritage, even though Ali is increasingly drawn towards the Western culture he finds himself in.

Parvez attempts to understand his son's behaviour but is continuously met with resistance and rejection. He is desperate to find some common ground between himself and his son, but their worlds remain apart.

Parvez feels helpless as he watches his son slipping away from him. He is desperate to make a connection with Ali, but Ali's refusal to accept his father's advice leads to more arguments and disagreements.

Parvez is desperate to keep his son close to his cultural heritage and identity, but his son's loyalty lies elsewhere. Parvez cannot control his son's behaviour, and he is left feeling powerless and helpless.

Parvez is left with a sense of helplessness as he watches his son drift further away from him. He is desperate to keep his son close to his cultural identity and heritage, but Ali's loyalty lies elsewhere.

Parvez is unable to accept the fact that his son is embracing a new culture, leaving him feeling powerless and helpless.

Allusion

There are allusions to fanatics, prostitution, the conflict between parents and children, tainted relationships, spying, alcohol, Islam, religious teachings, drugs, anger, driving, Buddhism, oppression, betrayal, step-sisters and domestic violence.

Personification

Alcohol, Drugs, prostitution and fanaticism have been personified in the book.

Metaphors

Kureishi also uses a variety of stylistic devices to convey the characters' emotions and thoughts. He uses similes and metaphors to create vivid images of the characters' inner lives. For example, when Parvez reflects on the change in Ali's behaviour, he compares it to a ***"lizard shedding its skin"***. This metaphor conveys the idea of transformation and the difficulty of coming to terms with it. Kureishi also uses repetition to emphasise the characters' thoughts and feelings. For example, when Parvez tries to convince Ali to stop going to the mosque, he repeatedly says, ***"You don't need to be so devoted"***. This repetition reinforces the idea of Parvez's desperation to make Ali see reason, as well as his underlying fear of losing his son to a different way of life.

Kureishi also uses direct speech to create a sense of immediacy and to convey the characters' personalities. For example, when Ali speaks to his father, his words are often punctuated with **"insha'Allah",** which is a phrase that is commonly used in the Islamic faith. This conveys both Ali's religious fervour and his lack of understanding of his father's point of view.

Discussion

The stylistic analysis of Hanif Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic* reveals a profound and nuanced exploration of themes such as identity, cultural displacement, and generational conflict. By employing various stylistic devices, Kureishi masterfully portrays the complex dynamics between Parvez, a Pakistani immigrant father, and his son Ali, who embraces a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. This section discusses the key stylistic elements identified in the story and their impact on the narrative.

Narrative Structure and Point of View

Kureishi's use of a third-person limited point of view allows readers to closely follow Parvez's thoughts and feelings, providing an intimate understanding of his internal struggles. This narrative choice emphasises the father's perspective, making his sense of helplessness and confusion palpable (Opoka, 2022). The limited perspective also highlights the distance between Parvez and Ali, as readers only glimpse Ali's motivations through Parvez's eyes, reinforcing the theme of generational and ideological divide (Alzouabi, 2022).

Language and Cultural References

Kureishi's deliberate use of regional dialects and cultural references enriches the characterisation and underscores the cultural clash at the heart of the story (Klímová, 2016). Parvez's speech is peppered with English idioms and colloquialisms, reflecting his assimilation into British society. At the same time, Ali's language becomes increasingly infused with Islamic terms and phrases, signalling his departure from his father's values (Mirza & Neelam, 2022). This linguistic divergence accentuates the characters' differing worldviews and symbolises the broader cultural tensions they embody (Arslan et al., 2023).

Figurative Language and Imagery

The analysis identifies the effective use of metaphors, similes, and personification in conveying the emotional and psychological states of the characters. For instance, Kureishi employs the metaphor of a "lizard shedding its skin" to describe Ali's transformation, capturing the painful and unsettling nature of his ideological shift (Wadi & Jamsheer, 2021). Such imagery helps readers visualise and empathise with Parvez's sense of loss and alienation (Johnson & Mercer, 2019).

Repetition and Anaphora

Repetition, mainly through the device of anaphora, is used to emphasise Parvez's desperation and helplessness. Phrases like "Parvez is desperate" and "Parvez is left feeling powerless" recur throughout the narrative, mirroring his persistent but futile efforts to connect with his son (Stockwell, 2020). This stylistic choice effectively underscores the central conflict and highlights the emotional toll it takes on Parvez (Atu et al., 2022).

Parallelism and Contrast

The story employs parallelism to draw stark contrasts between the characters and their beliefs. Both Parvez and Ali are depicted as being torn between two worlds: Parvez between his Pakistani heritage and his adopted British identity, and Ali between his cultural roots and his newfound religious fervour (Hall, 2015). This structural mirroring deepens the reader's understanding of their internal conflicts and the broader cultural implications (Leech & Short, 2007).

Allusions and Symbolism

Kureishi incorporates allusions to various religious and cultural elements, enriching the text's thematic complexity. References to Islamic teachings, Western consumerism, and moral decay serve to illustrate the ideological battleground on which the father-son relationship plays out (Arslan et al., 2023). These allusions provide a deeper context for the

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characters' actions and beliefs, enhancing the story's resonance with contemporary issues of cultural identity and religious extremism (Wadi & Jamsheer, 2021).

Conclusion

The stylistic elements identified in *My Son the Fanatic*—from narrative structure and point of view to figurative language and cultural references—work in concert to create a rich, multi-layered narrative. Kureishi's skilful use of language not only brings the characters and their conflicts to life but also invites readers to reflect on the broader themes of identity, cultural displacement, and generational tension (Klímová, 2016). This stylistic analysis underscores how effectively Kureishi's story captures the complexities of navigating multiple cultural identities in a globalised world (Opoka, 2022). Through the narrative of Parvez and Ali, Hanif Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic* tells a comprehensive and insightful exploration of the tensions between traditional culture and modernity, along with the consequences that can arise from this clash. The story serves as an admonition of the risks of disregarding one's cultural heritage and a reminder to be mindful of and appreciate the differences between cultures. Kureishi's skilful use of language and style in *My Son the Fanatic* creates vivid and compelling images of the characters while effectively conveying the emotions and tensions between them and accentuating their personalities. The narrative thus stands as an exemplary demonstration of the power of stylistics.

Recommendations

Future research could further explore the intersection of language and identity in Kureishi's works, examining how his stylistic choices reflect broader societal issues. Additionally, comparative studies with other postcolonial authors could provide deeper insights into the common themes and stylistic strategies used to portray immigrant experiences. Educators might also consider incorporating *My Son the Fanatic* into curricula to facilitate discussions on cultural diversity and the challenges of assimilation (Alzouabi, 2022).

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