

Symbolism in Literature: A Socio-stylistic Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to elucidate the symbolism in William Faulkner's famous novel Light in August. It allows other students and researchers to recognize these symbols from a syntactic and communicative perspective. It reveals the history and use of symbolism in literature. It also shows how symbolism differs from other concepts such as signs, metaphors, and allegories. The data will be analyzed according to the electrical model mentioned in the study. Therefore, syntactic symbols are identified through syntactic stylistic devices (repetition, polysemy, omission, parallelism, parentheses, and phonetic symbols), as shown in Figure (1). Communicative situational strategies are implemented using grammatical features, as shown in Figure (2).

Keywords: *symbolism, stylistics, socio stylistics, sign, communicative situation.*

Introduction

Literature is a written language, and it is a piece of art. It is full creative language. Symbols are figurative language that exists in literature. Symbolism plays a significant role in literature because “symbolism is one of the most important aspects of serious imaginative literature” (MacMahan, et al, 1986, p. 58). The writer employs symbols to enhance the meaning, and add aesthetic to the literary work. They are like a way that the author uses to transmit his messages. They are not easy to recognize. The reader needs to give the texts more attention to understand them. For example, if the author wants to talk about love, he will use a red rose. In addition, Faulkner mentioned the roads many time in light in august novel which symbolizes isolation and loss for Joe Christmas. However, each writer possess a unique style that is different from others. William Faulkner is one of those who has a different style. His work is full of figurative language like symbolism.

This study consists of two parts. The first part is the theoretical part which discusses socio-stylistic and provides an overview of the symbolism in literature. The difference between symbolism and other figures of speech. The second part is the practical part which examines symbolism in Faulkner's novel light in august depending on the syntactic symbolism and communicative situation.

1.1 Stylistics

Enkvist (1973) suggests that stylistics can be a subfield of linguistics. It may regard as a subfield of literary study, or it may consider as a discipline that depends on methods from both fields (linguistics and literary study) (p. 27).

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Stylistics is an essential part in language study. It enables a person to discover the language and its forms and function of text. It enhances thinking concerning language (Simpson, 2004, p. 2-3).

Leech & Short (2007) categorize linguistics and stylistics into lexical category which involves noun, adjective, verb, adverb, and general. The second category is grammatical which is concerned with sentence, noun phrase, verb phrase, clause type and clause structure and other elements. Another category is figure of speech. It consists of lexical and grammatical, trope, and phonological schema. In conclusion, context and cohesion (p. 61-64).

To sum up, stylistics is a part of linguistics. It can be said that stylistics is an interdisciplinary field. It involves both linguistics and literature. It uses methods taken from branches of linguistics and applied to literary text. At the same time, it used in literary and non-literary texts. Moreover, exploring the form of a particular text will lend to understanding it. Therefore, form and function are related to each other.

1.2 Socio-stylistics

Sociolinguistics and style are interlinked, and they depend on each other. The history of sociolinguistic and style is old. Coupland (2007) mentioned that Rampton's was interested in investigating sociolinguistic style, and his analysis was based on ethnography. He discovered new meanings that people form from old social categories when analyzing social structure within the style (p. 137-138).

Wales (2011) asserts that style variation appears in the situation and the degree of formality and closeness are also matters. People may change their style from “informal to self-consciously formal”. Style occurs in speech and writing. In the literary text, style is different from one writer to another and from period to another. Therefore, style considered to be distinctive and based on choice (p. 397-398). Moreover, she clarifies that socio-stylistics “studies the language of writers considered as social group” (p. 401).

According to Levinson (1988) cited in Dijk (1997) there are two sociolinguistic approaches: “the alternates approach and the ethnographic approach”. The first approach is basically related to traditional notion of style. Every person expresses certain meaning differently. From this perspective, sociolinguistics examines different ways of realizing the same meanings and functions. On the other hand, ethnographic approach “sociolinguistics is the study of the cultural distinctiveness of speech functions”. In this view, Observation is unique and incomparable (p. 144).

1.3 Symbolism: an overview

This section will discuss the notion of symbolism. Shedding light on symbolism in literature and comparing symbolism with other concepts.

Fontana (1993) state that Symbols are exist for centuries. They are related to culture. In ancient times, it can be seen in caves drawings. Those symbols may represents nature such as animals or something that is abstract or geometric. They might serve a magical function or they described a major pattern in people spirits (p.23). However, the history shows that everything in the plant can be symbolic such as “animals, objects, men, moon, flowers, and circles” (Jung, 1964, p. 229). Symbols and their meaning develop over the time. Understanding their meaning combine with cultural context and with different branches. The meaning of some types of symbols become constant and universal (ibid, 21).

Communications involve using signs and symbols. They appear in images, words that are spoken or written. Therefore, they represent reality. They refer to actions and objects in the environment. As for Jung, he illustrates symbols as “terms, names, or even pictures that may be familiar in daily life, yet that possess specific connotations in addition to their

conventional and obvious meaning. They imply something vague, hidden, and unknown to us". They found in religion, arts, advertisements, and fairytales (ibid, 8).

Symbol refers to sign 'visual or verbal', which represent something else in community. In culture, symbols show up in semiotics, (e.g. owls symbolize wisdom) but in other countries, owls may symbolize a bad thing. Therefore, each culture develops its own symbols or symbolism (Wales, 2011, p.408).

1.4 Symbolism in literature

In the last of the nineteenth century, symbolism refers to a literary movement that begins in France. This movement is a reaction against realism. Baudelaire was one of the basic forerunners of the movement, and other symbolists are Mallarme, Vallery, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Lefoegue, Remy de Gourmount, Claudel, and Maeterlinck in drama and Huysman in the novel. Moreover, this movement spread through the rest of Europe. In the twentieth century, symbolism becomes dominant force in British and American poetry. However, the writer uses a complex and private type of symbolization to express his unspeakable feelings (Holman, 1972, p. 520). Moreover, the modern literature affected by that movement. The attention moved to images and the arrangement of sentences and words. Edmund Wilson said "symbolism represents a day dream retreat into things that are dying the whole belle-lettristic tradition of renaissance culture perhaps, compelled to specialize more and more, more and more driven in on itself as industrialization and demographic education have come press it closer and closer". William Faulkner was one of modern writers who affected by symbolism (Karakaç, 2014, p. 566-567).

1.5 Symbols and other concepts

1.5.1 Symbol and Sign

Symbols and signs are two different things. Symbols belong to human life meaning, while signs belong to physical world. Signs are connected with things that signifies. Symbols are "artificial". "Symbols are emotionally loaded and are connected with ideas which are the most fundamental for human thought and culture, and the most difficult to grasp and express" (Cassirer, 1944, p. 41- 44).

Sign indicates something else. It includes wink, or gestures (Danesi, 2004, p. 4). Following de Saussure notion of sign, Thomas (2001) explains that sign formed from physical things such as "gestures, pictures and sounds". De Saussure called them signifier, and signified which refers to image or concept. The relation between signifier and signified is called signification (p.5-6). He divides sign in to six types. These types are "symptom" such as animal's signs by using body, and "signal" such as birds or bees sound. These animals produced certain sound according to situation. Another type is "sign is icon" such as photograph. "Sign is index" as cough which refer of having cold. "Sign is name", and "sing is symbol" (p. 8-10). On the other hand, "A symbol is a sign that stand for its referent in an arbitrary, conventional way" (p. 11).

1.5.2 Symbol and Metaphor

Aristotle is the first one who define metaphor by saying that "a shift carrying over a word from its normal use to a new one" (Richards, 1965, p.89).

According to Baldick (2001) metaphor is different from symbolism. Metaphor is an essential figure of speech. It may include verbs such as "a talent may blossom" or may be an adjective such as "a novice may be green" or long idioms such as "to throw the baby out with bath water". Moreover, there is a resemblance between the two ideas or things. That resemblance shows in the indirect identification such as "he is a pig". Metaphor used to build combination between ideas (p. 153). Furthermore, symbols refer to something else and there are no connections between the two things or ideas (ibid, p. 251).

1.5.3 Symbol and Allegory

Personification is a fundamental technique in allegory, in which abstract qualities are realized (Baldick, 2001, p. 5).

According to Morrison (2002) symbolism is different from allegory. He defines symbol as “the symbol transforms the phenomenon into idea and the idea into image, but does this in such a way that the idea in the image has infinite repercussion, and remains intangible, even when expressed in every language it will always remain unexpressed”. By contrast, allegory “transforms the phenomenon into concept, and the concept into image, but in such manner that the concept can only be stated, confirmed or expressed in the image in a way that is always limited and incomplete”. In general, philosophers agree that symbols differ from other concepts such as allegory and metaphor. Therefore, Symbolism and allegory have different meanings and purposes (p. 3). Along with Morrison, Eco (1984) believes that “allegories are designate directly, whereas symbols designate indirectly”. In addition, “allegories speaks to the intelligence, whereas symbols speaks to perception” (p. 142). Therefore, these two concepts are not the same as they hold different perspectives.

The Practical Part

The Eclectic Model of Analysis

1. Tufte's (2006) model: Syntactic Symbolism

Tufte (2006) proposes techniques for creating syntactic symbolism such as poetic diction, sound symbolism, and syntactic stylistic devices. These devices represent artistic values or refer to events or individuals. Syntactic symbolism occurs in fiction stories, novels, and poems (p. 253-255).

1.1 Syntactic Stylistic Devices

According to Galperin (1981) many writers use certain syntactic and stylistic devices in prose. In general, there is a relationship between words and sentences. In linguistics, syntax refers to types of relationships between words and sentences. Thus, syntax is one of the main features of style in literary work (p. 191-192).

1.1.1 Repetition

Tufte (2006) indicates that repetition is a syntactic stylistic device which is commonly used in fiction, prose, essays to indicate an artistic function or emphasize on something specific. It makes balance between sentences (p.223). She adds that syntactic symbolism is achieved through the use of repetitions, repetition of verbs, adverbs, adjectives, propositions, noun phrases. It is the simplest symbolic effects as it requires no translation from the reader (p. 256).

For example, (3.2)“as long as he holds his breath, it will not rain, there will be no raindrops, no schizoid water wobbling, sideways, straight back, it will be an even, even, even, even, even, even, even, world” (ibid).

1.1.2 Parallelism

Tufte (2006) clarifies that parallel processing repeats the same structure in the same way. It is the parallel of two entities or structures such as a verb with a verb, a noun phrase with a noun phrase, an adjective with an adjective, a noun with a noun. A balanced pattern of repeated phrases makes parallel processing a more cohesive and inclusive tool (p. 217).She points out that literary work is full of parallelism. Parallelism serves the purpose of equivalence between units and comparison between them. In addition, it is used to indicate a certain rhythm or movement (p. 259).

For example, (3.4) “its tone changes with kaleidoscopic rapidity- from irony to pathos to ridicule to poetry” (ibid).

In the above example, the parallel structure shows the similarities of syntactic structure. It adds a particular type of movement or rhythm.

1.1.3 Polysyndeton

Galperin (1981) defines polysyndeton as a stylistic device that connects sentences, or phrases, by using conjunctions or prepositions. It connects homogenous components of thoughts and ideas in one sentence. It has a rhythmical function. In addition, it expresses sequences. Moreover, a polysyndeton in grammar refers to a coordination in which all the connectives are linked with conjunctions. (p. 226-227).

For example, (3.6) “the heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect”.

1.1.4 Parenthesis

Tufler (2006) uses this device to analyze symbolism. For Galperin (1981), Asyndeton is the name for a parenthesis. He defines it as “the connections between parts of a sentence or between sentences without any formal sign, becomes a stylistic device if there is a deliberate omission of the connective where it is generally expected to be according to the norms of the literary language”. Moreover, she points out that this device used for aesthetic purpose and for determining intonation patterns. Therefore, without connectives, the sentence stands alone and produces long pauses. A stylistic analysis of this device demonstrates that it has an impact on intonation patterns (p. 226).

For example, (3.10) “Soames turned away; he had an utter disinclination for talk, like one standing before an open grave, watching a coffin slowly lowered” (ibid).

In the above example, 'He had an utter' becomes independent by omitting the conjunction 'because' or 'for'. The semicolon breaks the sentence into parts and indicates long pause.

1.1.5 Sound Symbolism

Tufler (2006) demonstrates that sound symbolism is a poetic device. It considers one of syntactic stylistic devices. It helps to create an effect. The effect depends on word order. However, syntax concentrates on the sequence of words, sentences and word order, their length, and sound (p. 254-255).

For example, (3.13) “so Ella said “yes ma'ma”, and hobbled down the gravel walk, crunch crunch crunch beneath the tress, and was gone” (ibid).

The example shows the onomatopoeia of the word crunch which provides

1.1.6 Ellipsis

Tufler (2006) believes that ellipsis device is created through the logic of parallelism. The device represents a series of symbolic acts (p.221-222).

For example, (3.14) “my Juvenal and Dante are as faithful as I am able or dare or can bear to be”.

2 Verdonk's (2002) Model: Communicative Situation

Verdonk (2002) introduces a model for analyzing texts in literature. He asserts that literature is distinct. It separates from regular social communications. Readers need to infer context implications, including perspectives since it is blocked from the usual external contexts. For him, there are grammatical features that emphasize the commutative situation (p. 22. 23).

Language is part society. It is used to communicate with others. The language in literature is distinct. Literature is an art and it is created to communicate. The communication recognize through certain grammatical categories.

2.1 Strategies of Communicative Situation

2.1.1 Pronouns

Verdonk (2002) uses this technique in analyzing literary texts. He asserts that pronouns indicate communicative situation. The pronoun I do not refer to the person who creates text but to the internal text itself. Literature is an act of communication and it always includes a narrator (p. 23).

Furthermore, pronouns have a significant and powerful role in literature. They are part of the structure that the writer creates. They are used to determine, identify, or design the narrator's role and perception. They help the reader to understand the locations of other characters or other objects related to the narrator's role. Therefore, pronouns participate in reader's narrative understanding and affect their emotions and feelings depending on narrative voices and characters in novels (Gibbons& Macrae, 2018, p. 2-3).

2.1.2 Tenses

Brinton (2000) states that tenses refer to the time of events linguistically. For him, they are always deictic. He believes that tenses are not the only way of indicating time. Temporal adverbs also indicate the time of events, such as yesterday, now, then, today, immediately, and tomorrow. Moreover, past tense refers to events happened in the past and it is separate from present. It is used in narration. It may involve the use of politeness to represent present or future. It may include the use of habitual expression used to. The use of hypothetical statement is possible (p.111- 113).

For example, (3.40) "Handel lived in England for a number of years" (ibid, p. 113).

(3.41) "I was hoping you would help" (ibid).

(3.42) "I used to drive to work" (ibid).

(3.43) "If you studied more, you would do better" (ibid).

2.1.3 Place of communicative situation

Verdonk (2002) reveals that place and time are easy to recognize in ordinary communication because two persons share the same context, but it is different in literature. A reader can realize the place of communicative situation in novels by spatial deixis. They involve adverbs of place, demonstrative pronouns, prepositional phrases, or specific verbs, such as come and go, bring and take. In addition, the reader can recognize the place of situation by words within the text like road, house, and garden. However, these expressions of place along with time (tenses) and person (pronouns) perform as symbols of communication in novels (p. 34-35).

Figure 2 the communicative situation of symbolism

After Verdonk (2002)

2.2 Data Description

William Faulkner wrote *Light in August*. He worked on this novel for six months. He started writing it on August 17, 1931 and completed on February 19, 1932. It was published on October 6, 1932. It is the seventh novel by William Faulkner. It is Faulkner's longest novel, and it is a masterpiece. It reflects the modern literary genre. Faulkner mentioned that the title of the novel related to the "peculiar quality to light" in the northern Mississippi. The novel about two opposing stories. One struggling ends in tragedy and the other achieves inner peace in life. (Fargnoli et al, 2008, p. 153).

2.3 Method of analysis

The model introduced previously is used to analyze symbolism in *Light in August* novel. The texts are based on situations. The researcher hires qualitative and quantitative tools. The researcher uses Excel software to find out the results.

2.4 Illustrative analyzed examples:

Light in August novel

Text (1) “Will you kneel with me?” she said. “I don’t ask it.” “No,” he said. “I don’t ask it. It’s not I who ask it. Kneel with me.” “No.” They looked at one another. “Joe,” she said, “for the last time. I don’t ask it. Remember that. Kneel with me.” (Faulkner, 1932, p. 282).

(In the extract above Miss Burden is talking to Joe Christmas asking him to pray with her). The repetition indicates syntactic symbolism. It is related to religion. It shows how religion is forcibly imposed on people. The repetition device makes the text rhythmic. It is the simplest way to realize and gives a hint to the reader about a particular idea. Miss Burden wants to change Christmas and makes him religious. Joe Christmas refuses to be religious because of his bad experience with his foster father. The text shows a simple syntax structure. The sentences are composed of commands, and they are the simplest structure.

The communicative situation strategies appear by the successive pronouns in Miss Burden's speech. There is a direct speech using the first person pronoun (I) which refers to Miss Burden. In the fictional world, the writer usually uses first person pronoun in dialogues and when characters tell their own stories. In the text, the first-person pronoun point out to the Miss Burden because she is the speaker, and the demonstrative pronoun refers to the idea of praying. Additionally, the reader can notice another pronoun (who) the subject pronoun of (I). The situation is in the present to communicate with readers in the present. It gives the readers that the feeling and event are now not in the past tense narration (see Verdonk, 2002, p. 26).

Text (2) “Again the girl beside him began that choked, murmurous, small-animal like moaning; again the boy hissed at her, his face still rigidly front, the little car rushing and bouncing onward: “Hush! Shhhhhhhhhhh. Hush! Hush!” But again Christmas did not notice. He saw only the two young, rigidly forward looking heads against the light glare, into which the ribbon of the road rushed swaying and fleeing. But he remarked both them and the fleeing road without curiosity; he was not even paying attention when he found that the boy had apparently been speaking to him for some time; how far they had come or where they were he did not know” (Faulkner, 1932, p. 284).

The situation indicates the successive use of syntactic stylistic devices which is obviously symbolic. The sound symbolism mentioned in the text (moaning, hiss, hush, shhhhhhhhh, and murmurous) adds an artistic effects. These sound symbolism reflects specific meaning. Moreover, the repetition of noun phrases (the boy), adverbs (again, rigidly), and other words add balance to the text. It also makes the text rhythmic (see Tufte, 2006, p. 223). The polysyndeton device is realized through the repetition of the conjunction that connects words and clauses. The author uses long sentences and separates them by using semi-colon and colon. He uses such structure to indicate Christmas's struggling life to find his identity and his journey to inner peace.

On the other hand, the communicative situation of the extract can be noticed through pronouns (him, her, and he). The pronouns (him, her) refers to specific persons in the text. Whereas, the pronoun (he) refers to Christmas. The situation is narrated from a third-person omniscient point of view. Faulkner employs this type of narration to convey everything about events, actions, and characters' feelings including their thoughts. The situation is narrated in the past tense. It includes complete action by using simple past and past progressive in addition to past perfect progressive. The last two types of tenses are not complete action. The action started in the past and keep going in the past as the action of the boy who was talking to Christmas. Moreover, the road refers to the place of communication. At the same time, the road for Joe Christmas suggests his seeking for

personal identity and clarity, but eventually, he always has confusion, violence, and madness associated with his manner.

Text (3) “Listen, cap’m. When I turn off up here. It’s just a short cut. A short cutoff to a better road. I am going to take the cutoff. When I come to the short cut. To the better road. So we can get there quicker. See?” (Faulkner, 1932, p. 284).

The situation is said by a traveler stranger to Christmas when he rides with him. Syntactically, the author employs simple structure and simple syntactic symbolism. However, the repetition of words adds emphasis and makes the reader understand that the character is focusing on the road. Faulkner uses informal language in the dialogue between characters, and he employs the slang and dialect of Jefferson, Mississippi. He did that to reflect everything in that area. Moreover, the parallel structure of (when I turn off up here, when I come to the short cut) gives some movement and similarity in the text (see Tufte, 2006. P. 259).

The communicative situation in the text appears by the use of direct speech of first-person pronoun (I), which refers to the unnamed stranger talking to Joe Christmas. The plural pronoun (we) indicates all persons were in the car (the boy, the girl, and Joe Christmas). The situation is in the present tense. Moreover, the place of the situation is noticed by the spatial deictic (here and there) and the word (road). Christmas always wandered in roads during his entire life until his death. Therefore, the roads in the novel have significant symbolism to communicate about Christmas personality.

Text (4) “Christmas lit the cigarette and snapped the match toward the open door, watching the flame vanish in midair. Then he was listening for the light, trivial sound which the dead match would make when it struck the floor; and then it seemed to him that he heard it. Then it seemed to him, sitting on the cot in the dark room, that he was hearing a myriad sounds of no greater volume—voices, murmurs, whispers: of trees, darkness, earth; people: his own voice; other voices evocative of names and times and places—which he had been conscious of all his life without knowing it, which were his life, thinking God perhaps and me not knowing that too He could see it like a printed sentence, full born and already dead, God loves me too, like the faded and weathered letters on a last year’s billboard, God loves me too” (Faulkner, 1932, p. 105). The above situation shows the successive use of syntactic symbolism. They are (polysemdeton, sound symbolism, parallelism, ellipsis, parenthesis, and repetition). The repetition of God loves me too elucidates the rejection to Christmas and he wants to feel that someone loves and care about his existence in the world. He wants to renew his life and prove his existence. The sound symbolism device can be observe mummer and whisper, and these sounds have meaning and they are part of syntax because syntax focuses on sounds, sentences, and word order (see Tufte, 2006, p. 254-255; see also Crystal, 2008, p. p. 443). The commas and - represents parenthesis and use of colon and semicolon break sentences and make pauses (see West, 2011, p. 135-136). The narration is in the past.

Text (5) “You know,” she said. “You knew before the other children started calling him Nigger. You came out here at the same time. You weren’t working here a month before that Christmas night when Charley found him on the doorstep yonder. Tell me.” The janitor’s face was round, a little flabby, quite dirty, with a dirty stubble. His eyes were quite clear, quite gray, quite cold. They were quite mad too. But the woman did not notice that. Or perhaps they did not look mad to her. So they faced one another in the coalgrimmed doorway, mad eyes looking into mad eyes, mad voice talking to mad voice as calm and quiet and terse as two conspirators.

Syntactically, the extract comprises many devices like repetition, parallelism, polysyndeton, parenthesis, and short sentence. Parallelism device employed to provide balance between actions and thought. It helps to create clarity. Parenthesis can be observe through the absence of conjunction and it is the opposite of polysyndeton (see West, 2011, p. 135- 136). Another device that can be realized is short sentence Tell me, now and

it refers to dramatic situation. Writers use that device after long paragraph (see Tufle, 2006, p. 270).

Table (1) frequency and percentage of syntactic symbolism in *Light in august*

syntactic stylistic devices of syntactic symbolism	No.	percentage
repetition	8	53%
parallelism	1	7%
ellipsis	0	0%
polysyndeton	1	7%
sound symbolism	4	27%
parenthesis	1	7%
total	15	100%

Table (2) frequency and percentage of communicative situation

Communicative situation strategies	No.	percentage
pronouns	7	50%
tense	5	36%
place	2	14%
total	14	100%

3. Conclusions

1. Studying symbolism is a fascinating thing. Authors communicate with readers through symbolism and deliver their ideas and opinions. *Light in August* is full of symbolism. The symbolism is connected to the theme of the novel racialism, searching for identity, and rejection.
2. The use of Syntactic symbolism is widespread in *light in august*. Repetition, polysyndeton, and sound symbolism devices are heavily utilized.
3. The communicative situation elucidates symbolic meaning. The person who narrates the events in *light in august* is mostly third-person omniscient, and first person refers to the characters. Faulkner uses the past and present time to communicate with readers about the characters and their personality especially Joe Christmas. The place of the event also realized in the novel. All the strategies of the communicative situation are approved in the novel.

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