

# *A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF HEMINGWAY'S "A Very Short Story"*

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الاسلوبية من الامور الاكثر شيوعاً في الدراسات الادبية، تهدف الى تشخيص تراكيب اللغوية في الاستعمال اللغوي ومعاني النصوص الادبية وأظهار السمات والخصائص الشكلية واهميتها الوظيفية في النصوص.

تتم الدراسة بتقديم تحليل اسلوبي لاحدى قصص الروائي همنغواي. وتفترض الدراسة امكانية استعمال تراكيب نحوية معينة لبيان اسلوب الكاتب. وتعني ايضاً ببيان طول وتعقيد الجملة المستعملة في القصة في محاولة لاظهار الاستعمال اللغوي في النص الادبي وتوظيفه كوسيلة مباشرة لا يصال ما يريد الكاتب من رسائل في عمله الادبي.

## 1.1 Abstract

Stylistics is the most widely used issue in the literary studies. It aims at identifying the linguistic patterns of usage and meanings of literary texts

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and showing the formal features and their functional significance in the texts.

The present study is concerned with a stylistic analysis of Hemingway's "A Very Short Story". It aims at exploring sentence complexity and length to see how the incorporation of linguistics within any literary text can be used as a direct means to convey the message that may underlie any text.

As far as sentence length and complexity are concerned, Halliday's model (1985) has been used. The study concludes that essential ideas have been encoded in complex and lengthy sentences.

## 1.2 Introduction

Leech and Short (1981:13) view stylistics as "the linguistic study of style, rarely undertaken for its own sake, simply as an exercise in describing what use is made of language". To them, stylistics is not a discipline in its own right; it is a means of linking between language and artistic function. The linguist's task, according to them (*ibid.*), is to answer the question, "why does the author here choose to express himself in this particular way?", and the critic's task is to answer the question, "How is such - and - such an aesthetic effect achieved through language?"

To Widdowson (1975:3), stylistics is "the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation". He also sees stylistics as having no autonomous domain of its own, but as a combination of both linguistics and literary criticism. The structure of the word 'stylistics' itself shows that where the part (style) refers to literary criticism, while the second part refers to linguistics. Widdowson (*ibid.*: 6) outlines the function of the linguist, critic, and stylistician. The linguist's concern is to find out how a piece of literature exemplifies the language system, i.e. he treats literature as text, whereas the critic's concern is to search for underlying significance for the essential artistic vision that a piece of literature embodies, i.e. he treats literature as message. The stylistician, for his part, seeks to show how elements of a linguistic text combine to create messages, how a piece of literature functions as a form of communication, i.e. he treats literature as discourse.

According to Fish (1981:33), stylistics comes as a reaction to the subjectivity and impressionism of literary studies. Stylistics aims to give an objective account of how language is used in literature. The stylistic analysis in linguistics is concerned with identifying and classifying the elements of language being used; in literary studies it is concerned with commenting on quality and meaning in a text.

Carter (1988:161) takes the same stance as Widdowson. He holds the view that stylistics is a bridge between linguistics and literature. Simpson (1993:3) defines stylistics as " the practice of using linguistics for the study of literature ". To Verdonk (2002:3), stylistics is " the study of style in language ".

Crystal & Davy (1969: 10) set the goals of stylistics as follows:

- a. To analyze language habits with a view of identifying, explaining, and classifying of linguistics features.
- b. To make critical judgments which help the stylistician to distinguish a good style from a bad one.

Wales (2001:10) states that " the goal of most stylistics is not simply to describe the formal features of texts for their own sake, but in order to show their functional significance for the interpretation of the text, or in order to relate literary effects to linguistic causes where there are felt to be relevant ".

### 1.3 Hemingway's "A Very Short Story"

**A Very Short Story**" is a short story written by Ernest Hemingway. It was first published as a vignette, or chapter, in the 1924 Paris edition titled *In Our Time*, and it later rewritten and added as a story to Hemingway's first American short story collection *In Our Time*, published in 1925.

Hemingway based the story on his World War I affair with a nurse he met in Milan while recovering in the hospital from leg injuries sustained at the Italian front.

The atmosphere of the story is very dark and hopeless. It may fall anyone into the hands of depression, because the work itself is a story of a "disintegration". Hemingway's famous word economy is presented in such an obvious way that the reader learns most of the information about setting, tone, plot, atmosphere and so on even in the first paragraph.

Hemingway uses a carefully chosen language to help the reader feel the fleeting, yet powerful, nature of such encounters where lust is often mistaken for love. The story is loaded with language that reveals the passion and sexual nature of the war time affair. The brevity with which the story is presented is sometimes criticized as being confusing. That is, the reader may misinterpret the text. One must read the story very carefully, even numerous times, before understanding the reason of the tale. It is significant that there is no dialogue in the story and that it is

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written in seven paragraphs with 633 words using mainly the third person pronoun to represent the characters "he & Luz could hear them below the balcony".

#### 1.4 Theme Analysis of Hemingway's "A Very Short Story":

"A Very Short Story" by Ernest Hemingway is about the love affair of an ordinary unnamed soldier " he" and an Italian nurse "Luz" during a war (which is probably WWI); and how they disintegrate after the war, how their relationship ends.

Although "A Very Short Story" is really short in terms of length, it contains a richness as to related events and conflicts. It begins with a stable situation; there is a rising action and this action's elements are some casually related events; then speaks the climax, which is specified in the longest sentence of the story; after this, the action begins to fall as it is specified in the last sentence. The last paragraph shows the falling action very perfectly and plainly. Hemingway's famous word economy speaks again.

The story addresses **themes** common to much of Hemingway's writings.

Central to these is the futility of love in war, and the isolation of the Lost Generation. In an atmosphere tainted by the constant threat of death, complex relationships such as that between lovers are doomed. Moreover, under the circumstances of the times, communion between individuals cannot develop in any depth. In Hemingway's eyes women are inconstant and promises

are empty, the ideal of marriage is unattainable and intimacy only leads to disaster.

Hemingway, in this story, portrays females in two ways. One is being beautiful, gentle and friendly "they all liked Luz". Secondly, as being dirty, useless and heartless, " a short time after, he contracted gonorrhoea from a salesgirl in a loop department store". Another view of women's bad character is represented in Luz, this view has been implicitly declared as she cheats on the man with an Italian major, "she wrote to the states that theirs had only been a boy and a girl affair". This reflects Hemingway's idea about women as being backstabbers and untrustworthy when it comes to love.

In terms of ironies, two types of ironies can be observed in the work, although it is very short. One of them is 'situational irony'. In situational irony, the situation is different from what common sense indicates it is, will be, or ought to be.' If it is applied to this story, the beginning of the work serves the reader a passionate love.

It is passionate; so getting far apart is not an expected result. The other is 'attitudinal irony.' It is similar to the situational one, but 'attitudinal irony results from what one person expects.' Here the sacrifice is 'he'. He gets passionate love letters; so does not prepare himself to a separation. However a short time after, he learns that Luz thinks their relationship is only a boy and girl relationship.

The story is a perfect work in terms of the reality that a war affects people very terribly, and its losses are not only deaths. The lives of people who engage in the war drastically ruin.

### 1.5 Syntactic Analysis of the Story: Halliday's Model (1985)

According to M.A.K Halliday (1985:192-216), a sentence can be interpreted as a clause complex: a Head clause together with other clauses that modify whether paratactically or hypotactically. The mode of combination is the mode of organization of the logical subtype of the ideational -metafunction. The notion of 'clause complex' thus enables us to account in full for the functional organization of sentences.

**Parataxis:** refers to the logical interdependency between clauses where the interdependents are of equal status, roughly comparable to coordination in traditional grammar. If two clauses are related paratactically, the primary one is initiating (1), and the secondary one continuing (2). (Halliday uses Arabic numerals to represent paratactic clauses).

||| I switched on my TV set || and there was a programme about whales.  
|||  
1 2  
||| Let's face it, || the human body is like a condominium apartment. |||  
1 2

**Hypotaxis:** refers to the logical interdependency between clauses where the interdependents are of unequal status. Thus one of the clauses can be seen as a Head being modified by the other(s). If two clauses are related hypotactically, the primary one is dominant (a), and the secondary

one dependent (p), roughly comparable to subordination in traditional grammar. (Halliday uses Greek letters to represent hypotactic clauses).

||| Fear of flying is quite rational || because human beings cannot fly. |||

a B

|||Because human beings cannot fly, || fear of flying is quite rational. |||

B a

As far as sentence boundary is concerned, Halliday uses three strokes |||, whereas only two strokes to separate between clauses ||, he uses the symbol ^ to indicate 'one clause follows another in the given order'. In the above example the structure can be read as a^B in which the primary clause(dominant) is followed by the secondary clause(dependent). The opposite way will be read when the order is reversed as in the second sentence as B^a in which the dependent clause precedes the dominant.

Since the aim of the present paper is to investigate **sentence complexity and length**, it has been found useful to exploit Halliday's model in the analysis of the story. The use of numerals and Greek letters proves to be vital and easier in literary analysis as it guides to an immediate recognition of the type of sentence used. Halliday classifies a sentence with one clause as **simple**, others with more than one whether of the paratactic or hypotactic type as **complex**. A mixture of both hypotactic and paratactic sequences, either of which may be nested inside the other is referred to as **mixed** sentence (using both numerals and Greek letters).

## 1.6 Text Analysis

19	They felt as though   they were married,    but they wanted everyone to know about it,   and to make it   so they could not	$1\alpha^1\beta^2\alpha^3\alpha^4$ mixed	25
20	Luz wrote him many letters   that he never got until after the armistice	Hypotaxis $\alpha^1\beta$	13
21	Fifteen came in a bunch to the front   and he sorted them by the dates   and read them all straight through	Parataxis $1^2\alpha^3$	21
22	They were all about the hospital,   and how much she loved him   and how it was impossible to get along without him   and how terrible it was missing him at night	Parataxis $1^2\alpha^3\alpha^4$	31
23	After the armistice they agreed   he should go home   to get a job   so they might be married	Hypotaxis $\alpha^1\beta^1\gamma^1\delta^1$	18
24	Luz would not come home   until he had a good job   and could come to New York   to meet her	Mixed $1\alpha^1\beta^2\alpha^2\beta$	20
25	It was understood he would not drink,   and he did not want to see his friends or anyone in the States	Parataxis $1^2$	21
26	Only to get a job    and be married	Parataxis $1^2$	8
27	On the train from Padua to Milan they quarreled about her not being willing to come home at once	Simple	19
28	When they had to say good-bye, in the station at Milan,   they kissed good-bye,   but were not finished with the quarrel.	mixed $1\beta^1\alpha^2$	21
29	He felt sick about saying good-bye like that	Simple	8
30	He went to America on a boat from Genoa	Simple	9
31	Luz went back to Pordonone   to open a hospital	Hypotaxis $\alpha^1\beta$	9
32	It was lonely and rainy there,   and there was a battalion of arditi quartered in the town	Parataxis $1^2$	17
33	Living in the muddy, rainy town in the winter,    the major of the battalion made love to Luz,   and she had never known Italians before,   and finally wrote to the States   that theirs had only been a boy and girl affair	Mixed $1\beta^1\alpha^2\alpha^3\alpha^3\beta$	41

34	She was sorry,   and she knew   he would probably not be able to understand,   but might some day forgive her,    and be grateful to her,    and she expected, absolutely unexpectedly,   to be married in the spring	Mixed $1^2\alpha^2\beta^3\gamma^4\delta^5\alpha^6$ $5\beta$	36
35	She loved him as always,    but she realized now   it was only a boy and girl love.	Mixed $1^2\alpha^2\beta$	17
36	She hoped he would have a great career,    and believed in him absolutely	Parataxis $1^2$	13
37	She knew   it was for the best	Hypotaxis $\alpha^2\beta$	7
38	The major did not marry her in the spring, or any other time	Simple	13
39	Luz never got an answer to the letter to Chicago about it	Simple	12
40	A short time after he contracted gonorrhoea from a sales girl in a loop department store   while riding in a taxicab through Lincoln Park.	Hypotaxis $a^2\beta$	24

## 1.7 Statistical analysis of the Results

From the above table, the following statistics has been arrived at, (which will be represented in the charts following):

Number of simple sentences: 11

Number of parataxis: 14

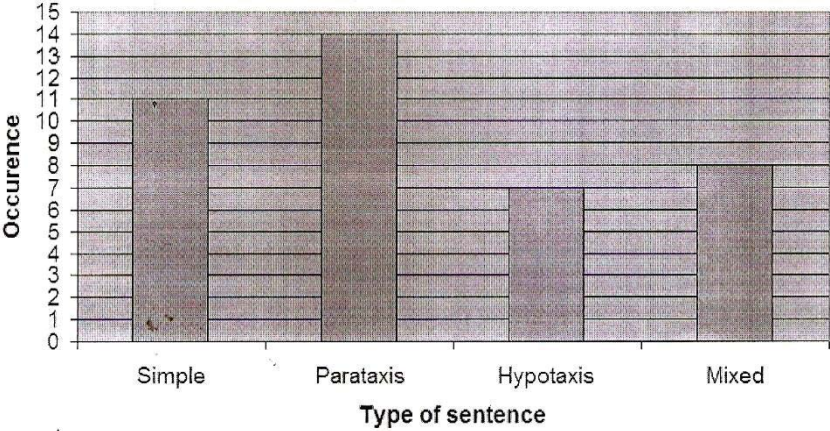
Number of hypotaxis: 7

Number of mixed: 8

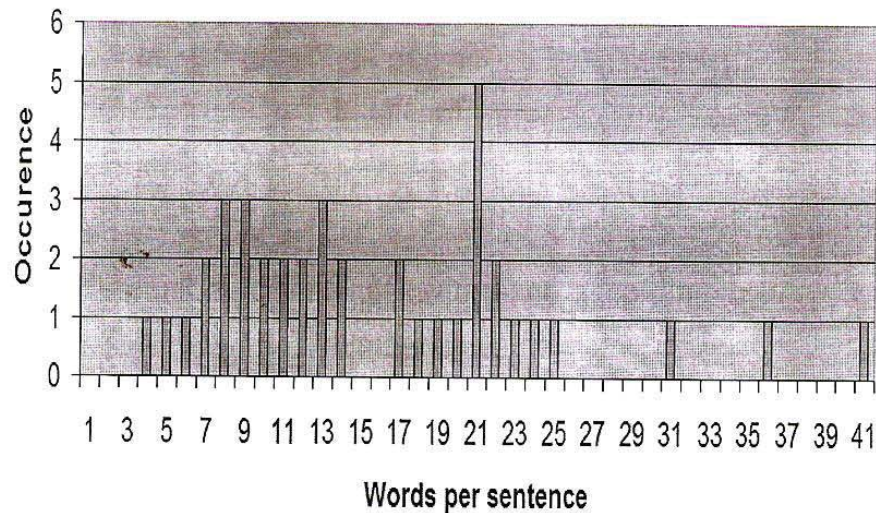
Number of words in shortest sentence: 4

Number of words in longest sentence: 41

Type and Occurrence



### Number of sentence occurrence according to number of words



#### 7. Stylistic Implications of the Analysis

From the above analysis one can feel how linguistic structures are strongly linked to the message conveyed in the story. This is clearly shown in Sentence 33 which is **the longest** ( of 41 words) **and most complicated sentence** in the whole story. Such complication and length may be ascribed to the fact that this sentence contains the **climax** of the story, that is Luz 's decision to break down with her lover as she realized that "theirs had only been a boy and girl affair".

The **shortest sentence** ( of 4 words) ,on the other hand, may hint at Luz as being good and lovable by all. This simplicity in the sentence reflects simplicity in the character herself, that she is simple, delicate, lovable, until the climax comes.

## 1.8 Stylistic Implications of the Analysis

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As far as sentence types are concerned, the analysis proves that the **parataxis** type is the most common type, especially with the *'and* conjunction. Moreover **the most prevailing sentence** within the story as far as number of words is the one with 21 words, examining these sentences proves that four of them are of the parataxis type, the remaining one is mixed, this may reflect the fact that expressing flow of ideas need more words to be included and in this story it seems that Hemingway prefers to express such ideas in sentences within about 21 words.

"A Very Short Story" has both **internal and external conflicts**. The major characters, he and Luz, always seem struggling with something in their minds. The most obvious proof is that before Luz puts forward "he should go home to get a good job so they "might" be married", she sends love letters to him. Moreover, these letters are full of passion. "They were all about how much she loved him." Such a struggle can be best represented in **parataxis constructions** since such a construction shows that there is always more to come, and that's why the writer adheres to the extension strategy of the *'and* conjunction (most of the paratactic constructions are of the *"and"* type)

There are also **external** conflicts. The most obvious one is between "he" and "Luz". They fall in love during the war, they share good things, plan their future. However, the problem of marriage prevents them, this is also another conflict; but this time it is man vs. society. It is obvious that they feel restricted without a marriage certificate even if they love each other passionately. After the war Luz changes her mind, and seems reluctant about having a serious relation with him, such a complex struggle has been expressed in **mixed structures** to portray the main idea in the story and the drastic change towards disintegration.

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It seems that the writer has exploited the linguistic devices in a way that suits his intention, he uses paratactic constructions when he wants the reader to feel the fleeting of the events, mixed constructions when the events illustrate the unusual of the events, and simple when the events move in their normal way. Such an integration between grammar and style cannot be made in such a meticulous way except by a competent writer like Hemingway.

### 1.9 Conclusion

This story is a part of Hemmingway's life. He does not give a name to the soldier because he wants the reader to know that he is talking about himself. As the story starts out, there is resistance to typical form. It starts out in the middle of the story and we do not find out many details until we continue reading. In this story there are not any morals or any hidden ideas. This story just tells about a bad time in Hemmingway's life. What makes this story so good is that we can see what it was like for Hemmingway at the time.

Generally speaking, Hemingway's writing is minimalist and sparse, with few adverbs or adjectives. He includes only essential information, often omitting background information, transitions, and dialogue tags such as 'he said' or 'she said'. He often uses pronouns without clear antecedents, such as using the word 'it' without clarifying what 'it' refers to. He is mainly known for his simple style. However, having analyzed the present story as far as sentence length and complexity are concerned, using Halliday's model (1985), it has been found that essential ideas have been loaded in complex, lengthy sentences. A technique of perfect integration between grammar and style.

### Appendix:A VERY SHORT STORY" Ernest Hemingway

One hot evening in Padua they carried him up onto the roof and he could look out over the top of the town. There were chimney swifts in the sky. After a while it got dark and the searchlights came out. The others went down and took the bottles with them. He and Luz could hear them below on the balcony. Luz sat on the bed. She was cool and fresh in the hot night.

Luz stayed on night duty for three months. They were glad to let her. When they operated on him she prepared him for the operating table; and

they had a joke about friend or enema. He went under the anaesthetic holding tight on to himself so he would not blab about anything during the silly, talky time. After he got on crutches he used to take the temperatures so Luz would not have to get up from the bed. There were only a few patients, and they all knew about it. They all liked Luz. As he walked back along the halls he thought of Luz in his bed.

Before he went back to the front they went into the Duomo and prayed. It was dim and quiet, and there were other people praying. They wanted to get married, but there was not enough time for the banns, and neither of them had birth certificates. They felt as though they were married, but they wanted everyone to know about it, and to make it so they could not lose it.

Luz wrote him many letters that he never got until after the armistice. Fifteen came in a bunch to the front and he sorted them by the dates and read them all straight through. They were all about the hospital, and how much she loved him and how it was impossible to get along without him and how terrible it was missing him at night.

After the armistice they agreed he should go home to get a job so they might be married. Luz would not come home until he had a good job and could come to New York to meet her. It was understood he would not drink, and he did not want to see his friends or anyone in the States. Only to get a job and be married. On the train from Padua to Milan they quarreled about her not being willing to come home at once. When they had to say good-bye, in the station at Milan, they kissed good-bye, but were not finished with the quarrel. He felt sick about saying good-bye like that.

He went to America on a boat from Genoa. Luz went back to Pordonone to open a hospital. It was lonely and rainy there, and there was a battalion of arditi quartered in the town. Living in the muddy, rainy town in the winter, the major of the battalion made love to Luz, and she had never known Italians before, and finally wrote to the States that theirs had only been a boy and girl affair. She was sorry, and she knew he would probably not be able to understand, but might someday forgive her, and be grateful to her, and she expected, absolutely unexpectedly, to be married in the spring. She loved him as always, but she realized now it was only a boy and girl love. She hoped he would have a great career, and believed in him absolutely. She knew it was for the best.

The major did not marry her in the spring, or any other time. Luz never got an answer to the letter to Chicago about it. A short time after he

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