

A Corpus Driven Study of Adjectives in Sidhwa's Fiction

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Abstract

The present research is a corpus-based analysis of adjectives in Bapsi Sidhwa's fiction. It is aimed at highlighting the various aspects of the usage of adjectives and their resultant effects in Sidhwan fiction. For this purpose, a corpus of Sidhwa's fictional works has been compiled which has been analyzed with the help of Antconc 3.2.4 software. For a detailed scrutiny, the concordance lines have been explored thoroughly. The research, in an attempt to be in accordance with the procedure of corpus-based study, has relied on a detailed analysis of lexical items along with insights that have been gathered from keyword lists, clusters and ngrams, in order to strengthen the validity, collocations and colligation trends have also been analyzed. The in-depth study of the adjectives, the use of which is thought to be a distinguishing characteristics of Sidhwa, has been carried out to validate the so-called assumption that the rather excessive use of adjectives is a leading characteristic of female writers in general and Sidhwa's writings in particular. The corpus analysis has lead the researchers to the findings that there seems to be an unusual usage of adjectives in Sidhwa's fiction in quantitative terms but as far as their aptness is concerned, it can be asserted that their use can be justified according to the requirements of the text. The research has explored new vistas in corpus stylistics to endorse the insight of the literary theorists. The present research will help the literary critics, new researchers of the author, teachers, and students to understand the text from a more syntactical perspective.

Index terms—

1 Introduction

he present study is a corpus-based analysis of Bapsi Sidhwa's fiction for exploring the trends of the use of adjectives in her writings. It is generally thought, though it might seem sexist, that the female writers are more prone to the use of adjectives in their linguistic behavior. It is also believed that as far as the respective linguistic behavior of male and female is concerned, the males are characterized by understatements and the females, on the other hand, are characterized by exaggeration and hyperbole. To measure the validity of this widely held view, a corpusbased study of her corpora has been undertaken by the researchers. Though the study of adjectives may, and can, fall in the domain of stylistics, yet our present focus would be on the peculiar use of adjectives in her writings with purpose they perform in the texts. As it is the application of the methodology of linguistics to the study of Literature, the present research will explore Sidhwa's fiction through the application of corpus methodology.

The research focuses on one linguistic feature: the use of adjectives in the text to reach the thought presentation of the author. Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used to analyze and interpret the data. The interpretations are made on the basis of the findings generated from both the methods. The research explores new vistas in corpus stylistics to validate already existing literary criticism and establish new insight. Corpus stylistics can identify the meanings of different word classes and investigate the differences in their use. Unfortunately,

there is still a dearth of corpus oriented research in Pakistani English literature and particularly in Pakistani English fiction. The available research on Pakistani Fiction is mainly concerned with literary analysis. So corpus stylistic analysis of Pakistani English fiction is still an unexplored area with vast possibilities and with a substantial research potential.

2 II.

3 Literature Review

The oft used term 'Pakistani Literature' is a term that eludes precise definition because it is not an easy task to exactly pin down the starting date of Pakistani literature. The adjective 'Pakistani' comes into use with the emergence of state of Pakistan on the world map but the writers whose work is included in this Pakistani literature are those who were also writing in united India. So some consider it safe to divide Pakistani literature into two eras: pre-partition and post-partition. Pakistan came into being on 14th of August 1947 and for all technical reasons this is the year that should be assigned the status of the root year for the burgeoning country's literary history. The genesis of a separate and conscious national identity in Pakistan took some years to develop, as the consequence of this phenomenon, the reflection of this identity in the country's literary horizon was also gradual and evolutionary.

Urdu, being the Pakistan's national and literary language retained its sovereign position in society for some years. The gigantic upheaval that was resulted by the largest migration of people in modern time by the partition of Indian subcontinent was also mirrored in the literature of the new state. The word realism could best describe this early phase in Pakistan's literary history as can be seen in the works of the writers of this era. One of the writers whose work best captures this phase is Saadat Hassan Manto who is best known for his (in)famous short stories and who, because of the controversial topics and the controversial treatment of these topics that constitute the main themes of his short stories, is often compared to English novelist and poet D.H. Lawrence.

Fiction in English language by Pakistani writers began to get recognition in the last three decades of 20th century; following the success enjoyed by poets. Fiction writers such as Tariq Ali published numerous novels and plays and broadcast TV scripts. Aamer Hussein wrote a series of acclaimed short story collections. Sara Suleri published her literary memoir, *Meatless Days* (1989). Many short story collections and some play scripts were also received well. The Pakistan Academy of Letters has awarded its prestigious prizes to a number of English writers. Many Pakistani novelists either won or they were shortlisted for international literary awards. Mohsin Hamid published his first novel *Moth Smoke* (2000), which won the Betty Trask Award and was a finalist for the PEN/Hemingway Award; he has since published his second novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and which has also been adopted for filmization. Kamila Shamsie, who won her first literary award in Pakistan for her first novel, was shortlisted for the John Llewelyn Rhys award for her third novel, *Cartography* (2002); she has since published her fourth novel, *Broken Verses*. Uzma Aslam Khan was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Prize for her novel entitled as *Trespassing* (2003). British-Pakistani writer Nadeem Aslam has succeeded in winning the Kiriama Prize for his second book, *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004). The novel by Mohammed Hanif, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008), a comic novel based on famous plane crash that killed general Zia, was shortlisted for the 2008 Guardian First Book Award. Kamila Shamsie and Daniyal Mueenuddin have also attained wide attention by now.

In this constellation of Pakistani English writers, one name shines the most and this is the name of renowned writer Bapsi Sidhwa, the writer of such exquisite novels such as *The Crow Eaters*, *Cracking India* and *Water*. Her novels have been filmed by Deepa Mehta. Sidhwa has been honored by the Government of Pakistan with Sitara-e-Imtiaz for her services in the field of literature. She is a prolific writer whose works include *An American Brat*, *The Bride*, and *The City of Sin and Splendor* among the two afore mentioned novels. But despite such a substantial body of works with a high quality in contents, themes and treatment of subjects, her works could not get as much attention of the critics as they deserve. This is perhaps the dilemma of all nonnative writers of English language. The scenario of critical studies in Third Worlds literature in English in general and that of Pakistani literature in particular has been dealt with at such length to point out that the nationalistic pitfall in particular and non-literary criteria in general must be avoided in the criticism of any literature. They have been avoided, or are at least less in evidence, in Pakistani literature but only because there is very little Pakistani criticism of this new literature in existence. Since 1960s the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* has been doing a commendable task by publishing a brief note which is usually followed by a bibliography of Pakistani writing in English and other languages. In the beginning, this bibliographical note was written by Syed Ali Ashraf, and then Maya Jamil and later Alamgir Hashmi wrote it. Unfortunately the note is not analytical nor is it meant to be so. What is worse is that it is also not complete and comprehensive since many publications in English are not clear and it is almost impossible for any reader of literature to keep track of all that is being printed in the country. Book reviews are mostly indiscriminating and their reviews are often full of clichés and praise which are affecting the authenticity of these reviews. Hashmi's own book reviews, particularly those which are published in foreign journals, are comparatively free from such deficiencies. However, as a critic even Hashmi is impressionistic rather than analytical and objective in his reviews and Pakistani criticism is still at a much unsophisticated level.

So far there is an acute dearth of academic research in either Pakistani or even in African, west Indian and

Indian literature or any literature of Third World countries in English. However, presently the University of Peshawar in its journal the journal of the English Literary Club has been publishing the works of Pakistani writers and even critical articles and reviews of these works. Similarly the University of Karachi used to publish Venture which published some excellent articles on Pakistani Quarterly, the weekend magazines of the English Dailies and institutional magazines too have been publishing short stories, poems and essays but the area of criticism has not attained their full attention. Some leading English newspapers in Pakistan such as The Nation has, however Published several articles on Pakistani literature in English and the Muslim and the Frontier post publish short stories. The Star and eveningwear from Karachi, publisher humorous pieces and Dawn group of newspapers too publish reviews and occasional poems. Perhaps the only journal in Pakistan which offers a serious forum for debate about literary matters and as published some of the most talented young poets of Pakistan is The Ravi, the magazine of the prestigious Government College Lahore. It was in The Ravi that the debate whether Pakistani writers should use English for creative work was carried on. And it was in the pages of this magazine that many poets first achieved publication for their literary endeavors. Because of this lack of criticism the history of Pakistani literature in English has yet not been written though such histories exist for other Third World literatures in English. Pakistani literature is being studied not for nationalistic reasons but simply because it too is one of the new literatures of the Third World written in the English language. The definition of Pakistani therefore, is loose rather than strict; cultural rather than political. Several works of expatriate writers like Zulfikar Ghose, Hanif Kureishi and Tariq Mehmood though some of them do not even call themselves Pakistani but are of Pakistani origin and their works are relevant to Pakistani literature. Bapsi Sidhwa's writings are also in need of critical analysis for their complete understandings. In order to present the literary qualities of her works, this research has been conducted by using corpus stylistic methodology with a focus on the peculiar and excessive use of adjectives by Bapsi Sidhwa in her works.

The term corpus is defined in various ways. Corpus means collection of more than one text (Wilson, 2011). The word corpus originated from a Latin word which means body. So corpus can be defined as the body of text. It is a large body of text that consists of thousands and millions of words and is available in machine readable form (Wilson, 2001). So the use of corpus in Linguistics can be described as the study of language in a large collection of texts that are available in machine readable form. According to Franics (As cited in Meyer, 2004) Corpus is widely used for multidimensional purposes in linguistics by researchers and scholars for various academic purposes. The size of a corpus is still a disputed issue. The early corpora were relatively short, for example, Brown Corpus and LOB Corpus. The relatively shorter length of those corpora was due to the unavailability of latest or advanced computer technologies. In the Brown Corpus, all of the written texts were manually keyed in. Earlier, it was assumed that "larger the corpus, the better it would be" (Meyer, 2004), but with the passage of time, the interest was shifted in favor of smaller corpus. Kennedy (1998) points out that a small corpus can better represent the features of a language than a larger one. Clear (as cited in Mehmood, 2011) symbolizes corpus with a 'sea' because, both are complicated, having enormous depth, difficult to define and in a state of flux. Meyer (2004) says that availability of resources can determine the size of a corpus. It involves funds, research facilities and computing facilities. Time is another factor that affects collection inclusion, annotation and tagging of a text.

4 III.

5 Data Collection and Interpretation

The date for a corpus analysis is generally the text in machine-readable form. The data for the present research includes the texts of the following four novels of Bapsi Sidhwa in xxx.txt format that can be used as input for Antconc. The analysis of the adjectives and their interpretation go hand in hand because of the nature of study in which the effect of every adjective demands that it is interpreted immediately. That is the reason that both sections of data collection and date interpretations have been merged. The texts included in the corpus are: a. The Crow Eater b. The Ice-Candy Man c. The Pakistani Bride d. The American Brat Because Sidhwa is relatively unknown novelist in English reading population, her novels are not yet easily available in digital format. Two of the novels were not in soft form and for complication of corpus of Sidhwa's novels were needed in soft form. For this purpose, novels were collected in hard form as they were not accessible from internet. After collecting the required data, OCR technology was used to scan the books that were in hard form. After scanning the books, another issue was detecting the minor mistakes present in it. Abbey fine reader 9 was used for deleting small mistakes. After that we also have to retype the data because of the great number of mistakes in the scanned text. Finally gets the complete text files of Sidhwa's fiction.

One of the striking features noticed by any reader of Sidhwan fiction is the excessive use of adjectives in her writings. She is too concerned with describing the individuals, places and things as vividly as possible, and for this intended vividness she resorts to adjectives which are exploited by her rather excessively. This propensity may be attributed to a supposedly-present tendency in females to use more adjective and qualifying words to describe any phenomenon. This female-specific characteristic becomes even more explicit in the case of Sidhwa where it can be seen that she uses more than one adjective in order to qualify the nouns. This peculiarity may also be explained in relation to her acute observatory powers which enable her to descry the minutest of the details and to convey them in most apt words.

In our corpus of Sidhwan fiction, the most frequently occurred adjectives are enlisted in the table that follows. The detail analysis of all these adjectives is not feasible in the scope of this study, so the top ten most frequent adjectives have been chosen for the purpose of analysis.

6 Table : Highest Frequency Adjectives in Sidhwa's Fiction

The table shows the most frequently occurred adjectives and their respective frequency in Sidhwa's writings. A comparatively detailed analysis of some of these adjectives is given in the following pages in order to establish their impact on the nouns which follow.

7 a) Little as an Adjective

In our corpus, little is the mostly used qualifying word. The use of little points towards a tendency of using understatements for qualifying the nouns. It has been used to describe both concrete and abstract entities. It can be seen in the following examples: ? She roared so belligerently that the bobby, who had bent his stringy length to hear what the little old lady wished to convey, straightened like a man shot in the back. ? 'You want decoration on road?' Jerbanoo inquired of the onlookers, 'I bring flower-vase from my house I bring little china statues. ? 'Oh, come now,' said poor little Putli, wondering when all this nonsense would come to an end. ? And it became natural to Freddy to say 'old woman' and equally natural to Putli to hear him say so; for Jerbanoo. Unabashed by the usurpation of her empire, resiliency shifted gears, and within a matter of months, adopted the role of the proverbial 'littleold-lady'. ? Of course, when it suited her fanciful little heart, she would run up and down the stairs and shift heavy pieces of furniture. The use of little highlights a point that it has predominantly been used to qualify the nouns related to female sex. The word little has a negative connotation as it implies a state of not being at the center; a position of powerlessness and meagerness. So its use in this way is a reflection of relative inferiority of women in our society. The point that has already been highlighted at various points in this thesis is that though Sidhwa is a feminist writer but his way of fighting for the feministic cause is a Sidhwan one, in which she tries to underline the necessity of empowerment of women by drawing the attention of her readers at the relative powerlessness of the women in our society.

8 b) Too as an Adjective

Too in our corpus is next to little. Too entails an excessive presence of an entity or a characteristic but the excessive is in a somewhat negative sense. It means it a presence that is not desirable in normal circumstances. The instances that follow show the use of too: ? The occasion was too momentous and her concept of it too uncertain. Billy feared he might push too hard or too awkwardly, and Tanya, wriggling with artless enthusiasm, was no help. ? Jerbanoo, ever ready for battle and finding things too dull at the flat, jumped into the fray. ? Our ancestors weren't too proud to bow to his will.

To this day we do not allow conversion to our faith or mixed marriages. ? He suddenly decided he was too nervous to cycle to work, too nervous to face his bosses and coworkers, too nervous even to venture out of the house after dark. In short, he was too nervous to look after his family! Since I was the eldest, and the only male, the entire responsibility fell squarely on my shoulders. It becomes manifestly evident from such examples that the negative connotation of too has been retained by using it with negative words. It has been used primarily to intensify another quality, so it works as intensifier. The adjectives which are being intensifies are those ones which, more often than not, are associated with the females. The words bearing not a positive connotation when used for the female reflect the inherent prototypical views of a given society about the women.

9 c) Long as an adjective

The use of long in the present corpus is aimed at qualifying the abstract nouns such as time, journey, meditation and other such words. Because this adjective has primarily been used for the qualification of abstract nouns, it has little relevance with the question of gender imbalance. Moreover, its neutrality and ability of not bearing any strong positive or negative connotation also adds to the comparative irrelevance of the word long.

10 d) Old as an Adjective

In the use of old, Sidhwa exhibits her exactitude as she usually talks about in exact figures like five-years old etc. This tendency towards exactitude is not in accordance with the female disposition, who are believed to be talking in approximate terms, especially when it comes to the issue of age. ? Twenty-three years old, strong and pioneering, he saw no future for himself in his ancestral village, tucked away in the forests of Central India, and resolved to seek his fortune in the hallowed pastures of the Punjab. ? The sixteen lands created by Ahura Mazda, and mentioned in the 4,000-year-old Vendidad, one is the 'Septa Sindhu'; the Sindh and Punjab of today. ? Taking firm hold of her plucking hand, he guided the gilet-pinchng fingers across Putli to Hutoxi, who was now three years old. ? Once Zaitoon overheard a woman saying that a tenyear-old was pregnant. Like its preceding word, old has mainly been used for the indication of abstract entities, particularly for the mentioning of age. The relevance of this adjective with our thematic consideration is in an indirect way. It is typical of women to be over-concerned with the age, so Sidhwa's preoccupation with it can be regarded as a feministic

penchant. e) Small as an Adjective Small in CSF occurs to qualify mostly the concrete objects. The objects like houses, car, bed and tables etc. are described by using small as a qualifier. As like the preceding qualifier, small, since it has been used for inanimate entities, has little concern with the issue of gender and gender (in) equality. ? They came upon small stone structures, little makebelieve temples, as if masons, halfway between constructing dolls' houses, had become serious, and turned them into Mandirs with spiralling cones and sacred decorations. ? Jerbanoo filled a small tub with water from the tap in their room and placed it on the balcony. ? It was a tiny windowless cubicle with an iron bedstead, an iron chair and a small steel table. ? I lie on a white wooden table in a small room. ? Jerbanoo swayed, and in a small, defeated voice, said, 'I feel fainting'. Mary relented. She helped her down and sat her on the chair by the fire.

As we have seen that the above discussed adjectives contribute very little in the thematic understanding of the Sidhwa's fiction. They, however, highlight a very apt point i.e. the characteristic tendency in the women to exaggerate with the excessive use of adjectives. This tendency can also be seen from another perspective and with a less negative implications viz. the acute observation of the women. Anyhow, apart from being a feminist writer, she is a female writer and that is what we see through the study of adjectives.

IV.

11 Conclusion

The study seems to substantiate the oft referred view about the excessive use of adjectives in Bapsi Sidhwa's fiction. In order to ascertain the validity of the assertion about the relative use of adjectives in males and female writers, a comparative analysis is needed in which Sidhwa can be put in parallel to any other male writer. Such an analysis was not in the scope of the present study. Yet the corpus analysis of Sidhwa's writing shows that there one can find a substantial amount of adjectives used to qualify the following nouns. If one follows the subsequent line of reasoning propagated by some of the critics that a female linguistic behavior is generally characterized by overstatements and exaggerations, the presents study also seems to endorse such a view, though the feminists may object on its overt sexism.

not as debonair as Sir Easymoney in immaculate		
? Sr. No.	grey checks.	1.
	Adjective	Little
2.	Too	Frequency 258
3.	Long	222
4.	Old	233
5.	Small	156
6.	Dark	112
7.	Round	112
8.	Young	110
9.	New	107
10.	Well	106
11.	Black	99
12.	Full	89
13.	Large	72
14.	Quite	70
15.	Thin	61
16.	Brown	60
17.	Covered	59

Figure 1:

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