

# 1 A Corpus Driven Study of Adjectives in Sidhwa's Fiction

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## 6 **Abstract**

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

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26 **Index terms—**

## 27 **1 Introduction**

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

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

### 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

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

## 47 2 II.

### 48 3 Literature Review

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

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

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

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

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

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

126 The term corpus is defined in various ways. Corpus means collection of more than one text (Wilson, 2011).  
127 The word corpus originated from a Latin word which means body. So corpus can be defined as the body of  
128 text. It is a large body of text that consists of thousands and millions of words and is available in machine  
129 readable form ??Wilson, 2001). So the use of corpus in Linguistics can be described as the study of language  
130 in a large collection of texts that are available in machine readable form. According to Franics (As cited in  
131 Meyer, 2004) Corpus is widely used for multidimensional purposes in linguistics by researchers and scholars for  
132 various academic purposes. The size of a corpus is still a disputed issue. The early corpora were relatively short,  
133 for example, Brown Corpus and LOB Corpus. The relatively shorter length of those corpora was due to the  
134 unavailability of latest or advanced computer technologies. In the Brown Corpus, all of the written texts were  
135 manually keyed in. Earlier, it was assumed that "larger the corpus, the better it would be" (Meyer, 2004), but  
136 with the passage of time, the interest was shifted in favor of smaller corpus. Kennedy (1998) points out that  
137 a small corpus can better represent the features of a language than a larger one. Clear (as cited in Mehmood,  
138 2011) symbolizes corpus with a 'sea' because, both are complicated, having enormous depth, difficult to define  
139 and in a state of flux. Meyer (2004) says that availability of resources can determine the size of a corpus. It  
140 involves funds, research facilities and computing facilities. Time is another factor that affects collection inclusion,  
141 annotation and tagging of a text.

## 142 4 III.

## 143 5 Data Collection and Interpretation

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

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

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

### 168 **6 Table : Highest Frequency Adjectives in Sidhwa's Fiction**

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

### 172 **7 a) Little as an Adjective**

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

### 189 **8 b) Too as an Adjective**

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

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

### 204 **9 c) Long as an adjective**

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

### 209 **10 d) Old as an Adjective**

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

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

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

235 IV.

## 236 11 Conclusion

237 The study seems to substantiate the oft referred view about the excessive use of adjectives in Bapsi Sidhwa's  
238 fiction. In order to ascertain the validity of the assertion about the relative use of adjectives in males and female  
239 writers, a comparative analysis is needed in which Sidhwa can be put in parallel to any other male writer. Such  
240 an analysis was not in the scope of the present study. Yet the corpus analysis of Sidhwa's writing shows that there  
241 one can find a substantial amount of adjectives used to qualify the following nouns. If one follows the subsequent  
242 line of reasoning propagated by some of the critics that a female linguistic behavior is generally characterized by  
243 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.	Adjective Little	Frequency
2.		Too	259
3.		Long	258
4.		Old	222
5.		Small	233
6.		Dark	156
7.		Round	112
8.		Young	112
9.		New	110
10.		Well	107
11.		Black	106
12.		Full	99
13.		Large	89
14.		Quite	72
15.		Thin	70
16.		Brown	61
17.		Covered	60
			59

244 Figure 1:

## 11 CONCLUSION

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