

Stylistic Analysis of Ahmed Ali's Short Story Our Lane

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Abstract

The undertaken study is based on stylistic analysis of Ahmed Ali's short story Our Lane. The study analyzes how the author has used linguistic features like noun, adjective, conjunction, sentence complexity to portray the social, political, economic, religious, psychological and cultural conditions of the colonized natives of the Indian subcontinent in the wake of the British colonial rule. The story portrays how the colonial rule has deteriorated the people socially, economically, politically and psychologically. Ahmed Ali's use of adjective is in consonant with the established norm of using 7 to 8% of the total text (Hofland & Johansson, 1987:6). Whereas, the median of 343 sentences is 13, which is shorter than the length

of an average modern sentence, which according to Ellegard is 17.8 words. While rebutting colonial narrative, he deviates from the standards of English language: excessive use of coordinating conjunction 'and' is evidence to it. Most adjectives of positive characteristics qualify to the past, whereas the adjectives referring to present are either of negative or of neutral characteristics, and thus the writer recognizes the glory of the past and condemns the disintegrating present and uncertain future in the colonized land.

Keywords: colonialism, Indian subcontinent, Our Lane, post colonialism, stylistics

Introduction

The Indian subcontinent remained under British colonial rule for about three centuries till independence in 1947. All ideological means were maneuvered to accomplish political, social and economic exploitation (Rejai, 1995). The colonizers used ideological means like literature, Eurocentric Historical Construct, Invasion Theory, Colonial Discourse and the English-medium western educational system to justify and perpetuate the colonial rule. They endeavored to prove that the Indian subcontinent had been ahistorical, devoid of civilization and culture (Sandhu, 2014). Fanon has propounded that colonizers obliterate local culture with an exposure to their norms and language (Fanon, 1952). The British colonizers developed a discourse that the natives had been ignorant, uncouth, superstitious and uncultured; therefore, it was justified for the British to colonize the land and reform, civilize and uplift the natives as it was the 'Whiteman's burden' and 'divinely ordained mission'(Chatterjee, 2005).

The literature produced by the European writers in India and about India is known as the Anglo-Indian English literature. In the wake of national movements, the natives became aware of their political, economic and social rights and they strove, by all means including literature, to get back the lost legacy and freedom. Henceforth, the native writers started using English, the language used by the center to dominate the periphery, against the center itself to vocalize and articulate their grievances and dissatisfaction with colonialism. The literary work of Ahmed Ali is written in the backdrop of racial tension ensued after the colonization in the region. The undertaken study endeavors to analyze how Ahmed Ali exploited his linguistic skills to portray socio-political conditions of the region in his short story *Our Lane*.

Research question

How effectively has the writer incorporated the linguistic features by using noun, adjectives, conjunctions and sentence complexity to maintain the thematic essence?

Literature Review

Introduction to the story

Ahmed Ali published his third anthology of Urdu short stories: *Hamaree Gali* (Our Lane) in 1942. It consisted of seven short stories: five were written during 1936 to 1938 and remaining two stories were written during his stay in London from 1939-40. The anthology was named after the title of the first story included in the collection. In the later period, he translated some of his

best short stories including *Our Lane* from Urdu into English and collectively published them in an anthology *The Prison House* in 1985, consisting of ten short stories.

Hamari Gali (Our Lane) is magnum opus of Ahmed Ali like Kirshan Chandar's *One and Half Furlong Road*, Manto's *New Law*, Hayatullah Ansari's *Last Attempt*, Rajendar Singh Bedi's *Warm Coat*. Anderson (1975) maintains that *Hamari Gali (Our Lane)* has significant importance in the historical development of Urdu literature. Ali (2007) himself conforms: "with my short story 'Our Lane' (Hamari Gali), the mantle fell apart. It was the year 1935, the centenary of Bentinck's making English the medium of instruction and Macaulay's Minute. The vista changed completely. My search had found a direction, India her forgotten cause" (p. 16). Zeno (1986) maintains that *Our Lane* is the magnum opus of the kind of realism in which Ahmed Ali has a good deal of command. He has invoked images of hostile nature, roaming dogs and cats that are barking, howling, sniffing and licking offal and remnants of food to resonate with the miserable and appalling state of affairs in the colonized land. Coppola (1979) adds, "The portraits are etched more finely in several cases by an analogy the author draws between certain characters and various types of animals which roam about the lane" (p. 221).

Synopsis

The story opens in a lane of *Koocha Pandit*, the narrator stands by the window-like-door to tell the story of the residents, hawkers, shopkeepers and beggars living in the lane with graphical details of political, social, economic, psychological and religious

conditions during the British colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent. The characters belong to the common class. The narrator of the story lives in the same lane. Mirza, the milk seller and his wife are living a miserable life because their one and only son is killed by the British army during Non-cooperation Movement (1919-1922) launched by Gandhi. The slogans like *Bande matram* and *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai* were popular among natives. Siddiq Bania is pro-British and runs a shop in the lane. A mad woman, who frequently visits the lane, is teased by the mischievous boys and once some people took her to the Old Fort and she has become pregnant. Shera, a poor villager, comes to the town and starts selling toasted chick-peas. He is arrested and sentenced for forcibly taking away the dead body of Abdul Rashid, the murderer of Swami Shardhanand, the leader of the fanatical Hindu Revivalist Party. After serving the sentence, he resumes the sale but earns little. A blind beggar begs by reciting the poetry of Bahadur Shah, the last Mughal king who was dethroned, jailed and exiled by the British, but the rich hesitate to give him alms as he is drug-addicted. The poetry is not only a reminder of the golden period of the Mughal Empire but also a heart-renting elegy on subjugation, slavery and foreign rule. Kebabi runs a kebab shop. Kallo is a young and beautiful maidservant; being a widow, she is subject to amorous advances. Aziz is a carpenter. Nisar Ahmed calls azaan (the call for prayer) in the mosque with profound resonance. Despite the ostensible piety, he sells adulterated *ghee* (clarified butter) to earn his living.

Analysis of Linguistic Stylistics

The fiction, including novel and short story, is the interpretation, representation and criticism on life, which a writer

produces by using language in a creative manner; hence the world of fiction, basically, is 'the verbal world' the reader comes in contact with. An author creatively chooses lexical units of a particular language to express his point of view about life. For the better comprehension of the literary text, it is important to analyze the words which represent the writer's motives. Lodge (1966) in his preface maintains, "The novelist's medium is language: what he does, *qua* novelist, he does in and through languages" (p. 9). Since literary text is a blend of linguistic and literary competence of an author, Chomsky (1969) focused on the former, whereas Culler (1983) emphasized the latter competence. However, Leech and Mill (1981) carry the argument further that a reader should transcend to "look in the language; rather he should look through language" (p. 38). The appropriate analysis and understanding of a literary text helps to assess and determine the literary vision and linguistic competence of a writer.

The stylistic analysis of literary text can better be conducted after breaking text into multifarious components and categories. Fry (1985) maintains that "... every word, every image, even every sound made audibly or inaudibly by the words in making tiny contribution to the told movement ..." (p. 402). It is these tools, techniques, text and figures of speech which in fact help a reader to visualize the fictional world the writer has envisaged. However, language is a dominant factor to determine the style of a writer. In addition, the choice of words, groups of words or type of words not only provide clue about the uniqueness of an author but it can also be treated as a variable vis-à-vis the availability of vast variety of words and freedom of choice. As lexical words denote to the expression of a writer, grammatical words formulate the syntactic framework of the

text/sentence. In the light of above principles, a lexical analysis was carried out to know how the writer has used linguistic features to serve thematic and literary cause.

Lexical categories

General

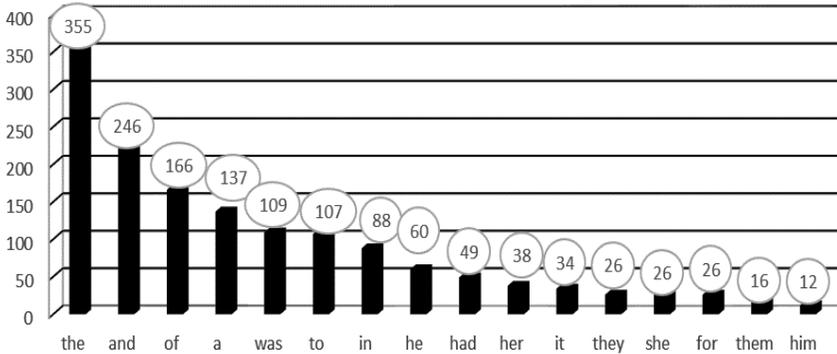


Figure 1. Frequency of common words

Nouns

Generally, authors use noun to name people, places, things, events, situations and conditions prevailing in the given setting of a story. Ahmed Ali has used some proper nouns to introduce characters like Mirza, Siddiq, Shera, Kallo, Aziz and Nisar Ahmed, but most of the characters are named after their occupations or social status, like carpenter, milkman, bania, kebabi, mad woman and blind beggar. The women characters are called after the names of their husbands. The imagery includes combating ‘dogs,’ ‘date palm’ with seared leaves and dark ugly trunk and dead ‘pigeons’ with stiff neck. The ‘cats’ are quarrelling, screaming and caterwauling. There is advancing ‘gloom’ and painful ‘darkness.’ The ugly and pale ‘sun’, fading and

waxing 'light' and dry and hot 'wind' show close association with the pathetic state of the natives.

In order to add the element of existential dilemma, the author shows that 'silence' prevails everywhere; 'souls' are dead 'life'; 'world' and 'universe' are vain and meaningless; 'dreams' are inflate; 'sleep' is dreamless. The modern 'sorrows' of the colonial rule have devastated the beauty of life. The physical state of the land is that the 'lamps' are desolate, 'buildings' are ugly, 'roads' are narrow, 'lanes' are dusty, 'shops' are closed and 'business' is slack.

The story begins with the noun 'door' but it turns to be a 'window' wherefrom one can only watch things, but there is no way out to get rid of this meaningless existence. 'Urchins' and 'rogues' are wandering about the lane. The mad 'woman' is prancing and capering on the road for help with bulging belly. The 'hawkers' are struggling hard to earn their living, whereas the 'beggars' are striving to survive.

The nouns 'gloom' and 'darkness' appear four and three times respectively, whereas its opposite 'light' has three entries, but it is preceded by attributive adjectives like 'dim' 'waxing' and 'fading' which blurs its impact and gloom seems overwhelming and dominating, which represent the state of the land and the people. In the same vein, the noun 'hope' has no entry, whereas 'hopelessness' has three entries. Likewise, the noun misery has three entries, sorrow has two entries, death has nine entries, filth, transience, transistorizes, and meaninglessness has one entry each.

Adjectives

Pound (1913:200) maintains that presenting “one image in a lifetime” is better than producing “voluminous works,” and it is better not to use unnecessary words or adjectives that do not add to the things, situations, characters, plot or theme presented therein. Authors use both attributive and predicative adjectives to describe the physical and emotional state of characters and add to the setting, theme and plot of a story. The use of adjective varies from writer to writer, and it is difficult to standardize the number of adjectives a writer should use; however, Hofland & Johansson (1987:6) suggest that the norm of using adjectives in an imaginative prose/fiction is 7 to 8 % of the total text. Researchers have counted all adjectives used in the story *Our Lane*. The data are as under:

Total count of words:	5157
Total count of Adjectives:	382 (including repeated adjectives)
The percentage of adjective:	7.4%
The norm of standard percentage:	7 to 8 % (Hofland & Johansson, 1987:6)

Total adjective used in the story constitute 7.4% of the total text, which is very appropriate to the norm of using adjectives in English language and there is no significant deviation (Hietanen, 2009). Hence, the story published in 1985 is found consistent with the then normative use of adjectives propounded by Hofland and Johansson (1987:6).

Ahmed Ali has presented the places and people including their social, economic, political, religious and psychological conditions in the wake of the British colonial rule in the Indian

subcontinent. The author has used adjectives to show the state of affairs in the land. It has been one of the main objectives of the study to find how the author has used adjectives to present the setting, characters, places and conditions. All adjectives, used in the story, have been collected, counted and classified. The data yielded three conspicuous categories of adjectives i.e. the adjectives adding neutral characteristics, positive characteristics and negative characteristics to the places, people and theme of the story. The neutral adjectives do not add to thematic essence of the story, whereas the adjectives with positive and negative characteristics do signify whether places and people of the colonized land are prospering or languishing.

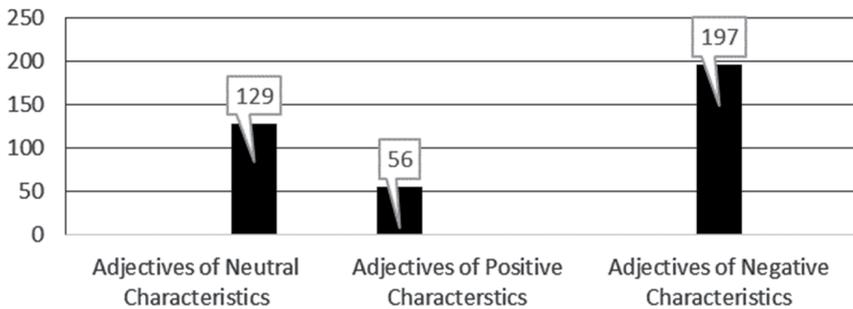


Figure 2. Classification of adjectives showing neutral, positive and negative characteristics

The adjectives of neutral characteristics

The following adjectives have been used to show the neutral characteristics. The figures in bracket show the frequency of the adjective in the text: “all (2), another (3), bald, bobbed (2), closed-cropped, cloth, distinctive, disturbed, dressed, dyed, early, earthen (6), either, enjoined, every, familiar, few (5), filled, five (2), flat, forty, four, gray, high (2), Hindu, home-spun, large, last,

little, long (3), loose, lower, many (2), married, metted, near, nearer, neighboring, next, number, off (2), old, one (7), only, other (5), same (4), settled, several, short, shut, situated, sliver, slung, small(2), some (7), sprinkled, such (2), summer, swinging, ten, that (4), these (2), thicker, thin, this (4), those, three-storied, toasted (3), triangular, two (3), two-storied, upper, white, whole, winter, wooden, young”. These adjectives add to the color, size, quantity of the places and people in the story, but do not add to the theme of the story.

The adjectives of positive characteristics

The following adjectives have been used to denote or connote something positive about the people, places, conditions, setting and theme of the story. The adjectives have been put into alphabetical order and the digits/figures in bracket show the frequency of the adjective repeated in the text: “alive (2), audible, aware, befitting, broad, costly, darling, deep, delicious, drunk, eternal, expansive, fair, famous, firm, glorious, God-fearing, golden, good (3), good-looking, handsome, happy, heavy, honest, industrious, last, lithe, loved (3), merry, mysterious, old, olden, ready, renowned (2), reverberating, reverent, rich, ringing, shackled, slim, sonorous, striking, stronger, well-built (2), well-to-do (2), well-trimmed, young(2)”. These adjectives add positive qualities, attributions to the people, places, theme and situation, but a considerable number of these adjectives refer to past events, whereas those referring to the present fail to add significantly, as adjectives adding negative characteristics mar their impact. Furthermore, though the colonial narrative claimed wide spread development, progress and prosperity in the colonized land, Ahmed Ali dispels this perception by elucidating that situations have aggravated. This use of adjective implies that the land and people of

pre-colonized epoch were better as compared to the colonized ones.

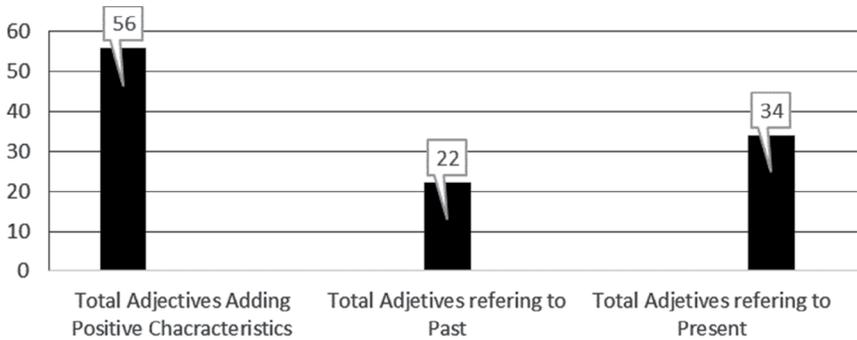


Figure 3. Adjectives referring to past and present events / situations

Adjectives referring to the past

The adjectives denoting positive characteristics to people, places, conditions and circumstances, refers to the past, when their present condition is analyzed, they seem withering and deteriorating from bad to worse. Mirza, the milkseller, belonged to a 'good' family, the 'delicious' milk he sold was famous, and his wife also came from a 'good' family, she had 'fair' complexion. They had one and only son, who was 'alive', 'darling', 'good looking', 'loved' and 'young' one, but was killed by the British army during Non-cooperation Movement; consequently, Mirza and his wife have become grief-stricken and their business has slackened.

Shera was 'honest' and 'industrious'; his sale was 'good' therefore he was 'happy', but after his arrest, he lost both business and happiness. Munnoo belonged to a good family, had a 'handsome' cousin, but he has turned loafer and is involved in stealing, eve teasing and nuisance. Though Hazrat Suleiman stood 'firm,' he was

in fact dead. Moreover, the palace he supervised was 'ready,' but it could not be used because the remaining slabs and stones were not removed from within the palace. There stood a date palm tree in the vestibule, in the past it had 'expansive' boughs, 'heavy' with fruit and laden with pigeons, but now its boughs have withered and only ravens, crows and kites rest on them. In addition, the blind beggar sang the poetry of Bahadur Shah which flashed the memory of 'olden' days, when the subjects were happy, prosperous and peaceful, and land was not 'shackled.' Whereas, the present state of the people, land and places is deplorable and heart-rending.

Adjectives referring to the present

The adjectives which attribute positive characteristics to things in present time, do not add significantly. For instance, Kallu is 'young,' 'drunk' with life, 'lithe' and 'slim,' but she is a widow, hence her beauty is rather a matter of concern. In the same way, Munnoo belongs to a 'rich' and 'well-to-do' family, he is 'merry,' but has turned loafer, miscreant and stealer; therefore, his future is uncertain. Mirza sells 'renowned' sweetmeats, but the sudden and untimely death of his one and only son has shattered him and his business as well.

The mad woman is ugly but not 'old,' she has a 'well-built' body. The 'God-fearing' people dress her, but very soon she is found naked. She prances and cries for help from somebody 'stronger,' but the irony of the situation is that she has become pregnant and her future seems more painful and tragic.

Nisar Ahmed has a 'well-built' body and 'well-trimmed' hair; he is 'famous' for his azaan, but he sells adulterated ghee. There are many adjectives which refer to azaan: 'audible,' 'reverberating,'

‘sonorous’ and ‘striking’ with ‘deep’ and ‘golden’ resonance; moreover, the ‘last’ notes with their ‘glorious’ and ‘ringing’ voice keep reverberating in the streets. The azaan may add to spirituality and individual inner peace, yet the prevailing chaotic disintegration remains unaddressed.

Abdul Rashid is hanged on the charges of killing Swami Shardhanand. The Muslims take his dead body forcibly and give it the burial ‘befitting’ to a saint. The ‘well-to-do’ people avoid giving charity to the blind beggar as he is a drug addict. The people are ‘aware’ but it is of upcoming misery that they are aware; there is ‘eternal’ silence, which signifies death, passiveness and inaction. In addition, the people are listening to superstitious stories with ‘reverent’ amazement and still they believe that the ways of God are ‘mysterious’.

The adjectives of negative characteristics

Ahmed Ali has used 196 adjectives which show the adverse state of the people, places, animals, birds, trees, weather and existential dilemma. By employing these adjectives to the imagery, the writer helps reader to envisage the deplorable state of the people. The used adjectives showing adverse state are classified as under:

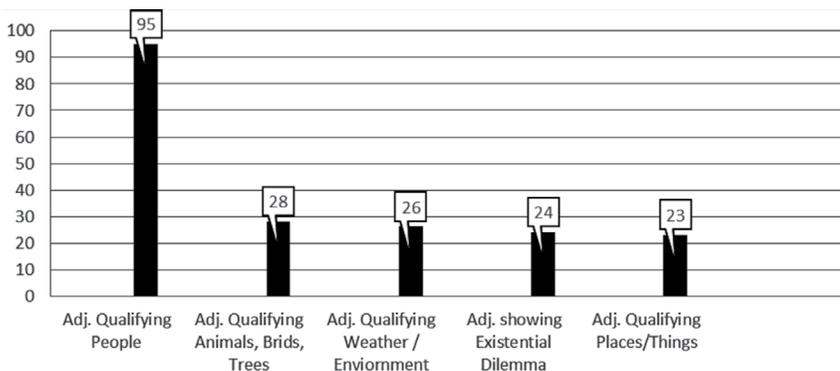


Figure 4. Adjectives showing adverse/negative characteristics

The adjectives portraying poignant conditions of the people

Munnoo is an 'adept' thief; though 'young' yet with a 'drawn' and 'dry' face, which further disfigures when Kallo strongly retaliates and rejects his amorous advances. He becomes 'crestfallen,' and 'injured' moreover his eyes, which are 'sharp,' look 'poisonous;' and his voice is 'hurt.' Kallo is a 'lonely,' 'dark' woman; she is a widow and becomes 'furious' when Munnoo chases and teases her immorally.

There is an 'alone,' 'anguished,' 'heavy,' 'mad' woman, who is 'ugly' and 'naked.' She makes 'wild' cries with her 'ugly' and 'cracked' voice when urchins tease her incessantly. In addition, there is a 'short,' 'feeble,' 'mean,' 'insignificant,' 'blind' beggar, with 'dust-begrimmed' beard, who is 'drug-addicted,' therefore the well-off people are reluctant to give him charity.

Mirza daunts the urchins with 'gruff' voice, but he himself is 'stunned' when he sees the 'blood-smeared' 'dead' body of his one and only son, who was his 'helping' hand, solace and guaranty of old age. His 'receding' figure with 'disarrayed' hair looks 'demented' and 'done.' Mirza's wife is 'old' and 'toothless;' her 'wrinkled' face has become 'silent' after the death of her son.

Shera is a 'thin,' 'lean' fellow with 'thin' and 'bony' legs; he wears 'dirty' clothes and his shirt is 'tattered.' He has 'dark' hollows, 'thin,' 'visible' and 'red' threads on his eyes. Nisar Ahmed has 'dark' complexion with 'conspicuous' callosity on his forehead.

The Muslim are 'angry' at the arrest of Abdul Rashid, who

kills the leader of 'fanatical,' 'revivalist,' 'Hindu' party, but they become 'excited' when he was hanged, they took his 'dead' body forcibly from the police and marched with 'resounding' cries.

Generally, 'human' kindness is missing; the 'last' Mughal king has lost his power, the 'British' officers are marching in the land and have left people 'dead'. Hazrat Suleiman is also 'dead', 'gone' and 'oblivious.' Aziz and other natives are 'lost' in the mysterious tale and are 'oblivious' of their surroundings. The people are with 'numb' bodies, 'fettered' hands, 'shackled' feet and 'small' eyes; their necks have become 'used to' the rubbing of the 'iron' collars and the young urchin and rogue boys are 'good-for-nothing.'

The adjectives qualifying animals, birds and trees with poignant characteristics

The quantification of the adjectives, showing the adverse state of the animals, birds and trees, is as under:

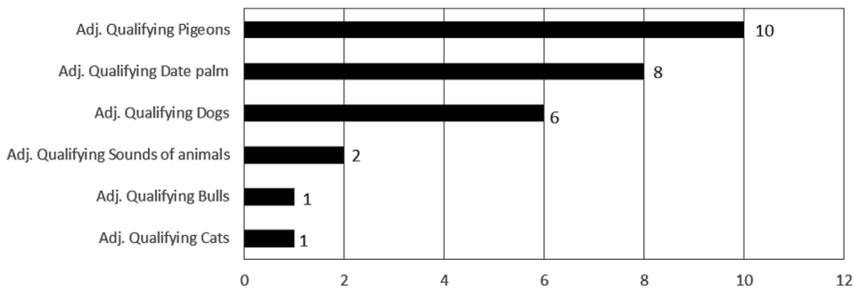


Figure 5. Adjectives qualifying animals, birds, trees

In order to intensify the presentation of the deplorable physical state of the people, the author correlates it with the animals,

birds and plants of the land; his imagination feeds on the imagery of the ‘sickly,’ ‘starving,’ ‘angry,’ ‘combating’ dogs, ‘old;’ ‘bare-stamp’ date palm with ‘ugly,’ ‘dark’ trunk and ‘fallen’ and ‘seared’ leaves. Pigeons have ‘stiff’ and ‘sticking-up’ legs, their wings are ‘soaked,’ the eyes are ‘red’ and the neck is ‘bent’.

Adjectives adding adverse features to weather, cloud, sky, darkness or gloom

In the same vein, the writer has used different adjectives with poignant characteristics to qualify to the weather, sun, light, day, wind, lanes, clouds, color, sky etc. There is ‘advancing’ darkness, ‘painful’ and ‘silent’ gloom, ‘dismal’ and ‘dark’ night, ‘waxing,’ ‘fading’ light, ‘ashy,’ ‘pale’ and ‘scorching’ sun, ‘cold,’ ‘damp,’ ‘dry’ and ‘hot’ wind and ‘dirty,’ ‘dust-covered’ and ‘red’ clouds.

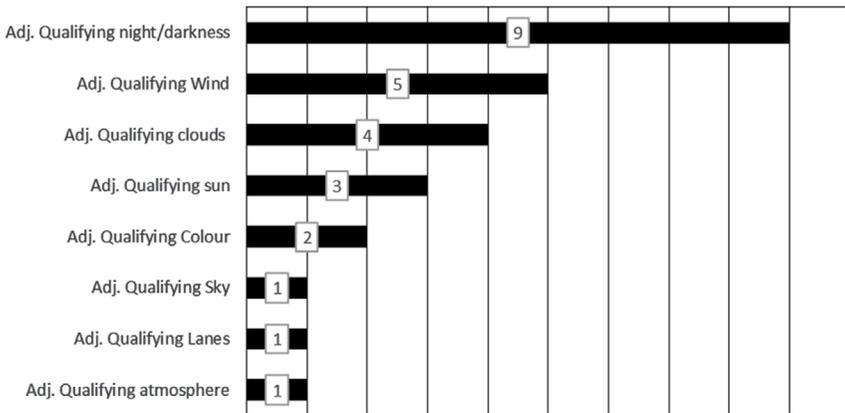


Figure 6. Adjectives qualifying whether, cloud, sky, darkness, gloom

Adjectives showing existential dilemma

Ahmed Ali has artistically drawn the existential dilemma in the story. He has inculcated the absurdity of life, world, and universe in the midst of chaos, uncertainty, passiveness and inaction borne in the wake of colonial rule in the land. The life is 'senseless,' 'ephemeral,' 'passing' and 'subjective;' 'increasing' silence has mitigated the difference of glory and disgrace. The sleep is 'dreamless,' however if there are dreams they are 'inflated.' The people are 'unaware,' 'unconscious' and with no 'living' souls, moreover 'happy in helplessness;' everything, life, world and universe inclusive' is 'vain,' 'meaningless,' 'fleeting' and 'impermanent.'

Adjectives adding adverse features to places and things

The author adds certain adjectives to the places and things which portray the pathetic conditions all-prevailing and pervading the land. The 'colonial' rule has brought 'modern' sorrows to the land. The roads are 'narrow' and 'deserted;' shops are 'closed,' business is 'slack,' lamps are 'desolate;' however, 'English' costumes are in vogue; 'tattered' bits of paper are hovering over 'ugly' buildings.

Conjunctions

Fiction writers use conjunctions to make relation, contrast, addition, connectivity, coherence and causal connection in the plot of a story. The author has used both coordinating and subordinating conjunctions in the story. In addition, there are some entries of correlative conjunctions. Some examples of coordinating, subordinating and correlative conjunctions are included respectively.

“People could go to other localities through our Mohallah; and all sorts of men passed below my window”(Ali, 2012, p. 68). “When the Police refused to hand it over, the fury of the mob became uncontrollable”(Ali, 2012, p. 71). “There was such sadness yet peace in the voice that my boredom was turned to a silent gloom” (Ali, 2012, p. 73).

Coordinating conjunctions

These coordinating conjunctions are used in the story, the digits show the frequency of appearance in the text: ‘yet’ (2), ‘nor’ (2), ‘so’ (4), ‘for’ (5), ‘or’ (17), ‘but’ (37), ‘and’ (247). Ahmed Ali has over-used coordinating conjunction ‘and’ and its frequency is (247). The conjunction ‘but’ has been used to show the contrast between the present and past. This contrast establishes that the present situation of the colonized land has worsened, which was comparatively better in the pre-colonized period. Besides, the conjunction ‘and’ develops a connection in the various segments of the story which portray the gloomy, and withering state of people and places of the land, and thus the overall impression of colonial disintegration has been accomplished by the excessive use of the conjunction. To begin a sentence with the conjunction ‘and’ is not approved in a formal normative writing, yet the case differs in creative fiction writings. Ahmed Ali has effectively used this coordinator to develop a holistic impression of languishing state of people and places in the colonized land. It adds to the connectivity of plot and thematic essence to the story.

Subordinating conjunctions

The author has used following subordinating conjunctions to show contrast, conditionality and addition of adversity to the theme:

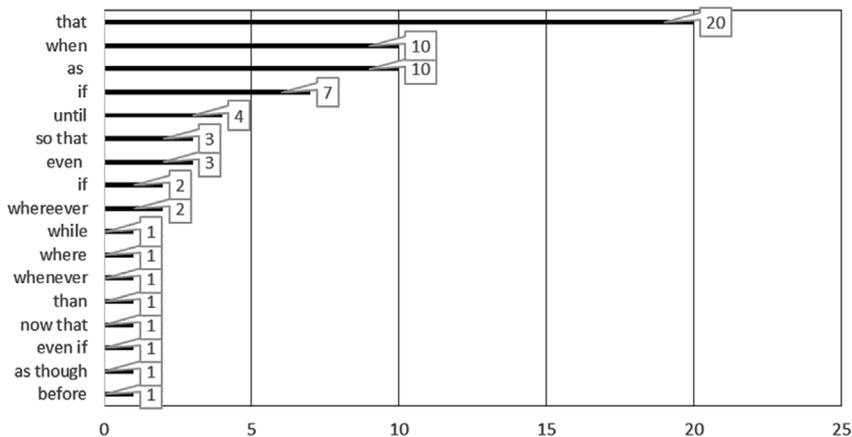


Figure 7. Subordinating conjunctions

Using double conjunctions and close entries

Ahmed Ali has used double conjunctions in the story: ‘and if’ (3), ‘but if’ (1) ‘or that’ (1). Besides, there are number of words or conjunctions which have close entries and appear in the same paragraph or close sentence proximity. ‘Sometimes’ has five entries and three are in the same paragraph (lines: 6-12). ‘Meaningless/ness’ has three entries all are in one paragraph. ‘Vision’ appears twice in the same paragraph. Only one and same coordinating conjunction ‘and’ has been used six times in the same paragraph (lines: 14-20). Likewise, ‘far and wide’ and ‘wherever’ each has two entries and all appear in the same paragraph (lines: 274-75).

Sentence length and variety

Nordquist (2017b) explains, “In a composition, *sentence variety* refers to the practice of varying the length and structure of sentences to avoid monotony and provide appropriate emphasis” (p. 1). The length of a comprehensibly readable sentence has varied through ages. Sentences of average 104 words were found effective in the political speech of William Jennings Bryan in 1896, whereas present political speeches prefer using less than 20 words in a sentence (Elliott & Carroll, 2005). Gunning (1964) establishes that only skillful writers like Thomas Wolfe and Charles Dickens can write long sentence with clarity; nonetheless, they used it occasionally, whereas most of their sentences have less than 20 words. Hemingway dispensed with the flowery use of adjectives and became famous for a terse minimalist style of writing. To his wonderful brevity, he could narrate a story within 6 words: “For sale: baby shoes, never born” (Clark, 2006:1). A writer has two viable options either to vary length or pattern of a sentence. Olson, DeGeorge, & Ray (1985) maintain that it is better to vary the length rather than pattern to accomplish clarity, interest and directness in a sentence. “As Strunk and White say, “variety in sentence length is what’s needed. All short will sound stupid. All long will sound stuffy” (quoted in Nordquist, 2017a, p. 1).

Ahmed Ali’s sentence length and variety is compared with the norm of modern English writing. The author has used some pieces of poetry of Bhadur Shah Zafar; these pieces, though translated from Urdu, have been separately discussed during the analysis of lexical categories and sentence complexity. The count of words and sentences has been shown in tabular form:

Prose		Poetry	
No of Sentences	Count of Words	No. of Verses	Count of Words
343	5157	8	47

All the words and sentences used in the story, except those used in poetical pieces, have been counted and compared with the norm of fiction writing. Ahmed Ali has used both short and long sentences ranging from one word to fifty-seven words, therefore the simple average might have been misleading, hence the median of all sentences has been calculated, which is 13 words per sentence, whereas the mean is 15.03. The length of sentences used in the story is shown as under:

No of Sentences	Total Words	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
343	5157	15.03	13.00	9.414

A sentence is “a complete structure found in written texts, bounded by sentence punctuation” (Biber, Conrad, & Leech, 2008, p. 460). In this study, the written text bounded by full stop, exclamation sign and question mark has been treated as a sentence, with the exception of two sentences ending in colon, where the reported speech is in poetic form, therefore the reporting speech has been treated as a sentence.

The literature produced in the former colonies foregrounded the tension and strain prevailing between the colonizers and the colonized (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2003). Ahmed Ali's story not only comprises the tension but it also makes creative use of English language to carry the burden of his colonial experience. English that was considered the language of center, power and appropriation

to communicate with the periphery was used by the periphery or the colonized to voice their concerns and launch a creative protest against the colonial rule and narrative. Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin (2003) postulate that indigenous writers used English language for two reasons: first, to deny its status as a sole robust metropolitan source of communication; second, to appropriate and reconstitute it for a new use. In this pursuit, they dispensed with the formal, standard and contextual use of English language. Thus, postcolonial writers, with an appropriation and abrogation of English language, developed a linguistic phenomenon to carry the burden of their colonial experiences along with their cultural, social and historical heritages. Das and Patra (2009) add that postcolonial writers used English as a medium to rebut the colonial narrative and legacy. In addition, they also brought their socio-political history and cultural legacy to the limelight. Ahmed Ali, being a postcolonial writer, uses English to serve his postcolonial experience. As he had been a staunch critic of imperial subjugation of people and land, so was his stance on English language. Therefore, the deviation from standards of English language is also an obvious feature of Ahmed Ali's style. For instance, 'sometimes,' 'meaningless/ness' and 'vision' have five, three and two entries respectively, but they appear in the same paragraphs. The conjunction 'and' appears six times in the same paragraph. Hence, the variety of semantics is compromised at the cost of postcolonial abrogation and appropriation of English language.

Ahmed Ali has used sentences with a variety of pattern and length. He has used short, medium and long sentences, which range from one word minimum to 57 words maximum. However, Ahmed Ali's sentences become brief, sharp, pointed and terse when he

comes to narrate action, will and change, whereas the postcolonial passivity, inaction and lethargy are resonant and synonymous with long, tedious, verbose and diffuse sentences.

Conclusion

Ahmed Ali, in his short story *Our Lane*, has presented the socio-economic and religio-political panoramic picture of a lane in Koocha Pandit, which stands as a microcosm of the Indian subcontinent during the British colonial rule. The natives have been shown living in a miserable state and doing trivial business, which rebuts the colonial narrative claims of widespread regional development and progress.

There are six stories within the story. There is no major character and the plot revolves around the common people. The author has employed the first-person narrative, in which one of the characters narrates; however, the narration mode switches between direct and indirect speech. The author has used a variety of lexical units which constitute 'the world of fiction.' Nouns comprise the names of people, place, animals, birds, plants, conditions and existential dilemma. Adjectives have been used to add neutral, positive and negative characteristics to the nouns. There are 5157 words in which 382 are adjectives, which constitute 7.4% of the total text, that is in consonance with the established norms of using adjectives in English which is 7.8% of the total text (Hofland & Johansson, 1987). The author has used both subordinating and coordinating conjunctions; the frequency of coordinating conjunction 'and' is very high, that is, 247. The writer has used 5157 words in

343 sentences; there are short, medium and long sentences ranging from one word to fifty-seven words. The median is 13 and the mean is 15.03. The calculated length of the sentences is shorter than the length of an average modern sentence, which according to Ellegard (1978) is 17.8 words.

The author has used the genre of short story that is brief, direct and pointed to launch a creative protest against the colonial rule in the region. Social disintegration, moral decadence, existential dilemma, passivity and inaction prevailing in the plot of the story are offshoot of colonial rule in the region. Absence of a major character in the story connotes deteriorated state of human development. Ahmed Ali, being a postcolonial writer, uses English as a medium to voice his concerns, loss and legacy. While doing this, he does not hesitate to deviate from the standards of English language, so that it can carry the burden of his colonial experience. Prevailing aberrations signify non-conformist stance on correctness, appropriation and authority associated with English being the language of the center. He uses English to serve his thematic cause on the one hand and refute its status on the other. The excessive use of the coordinating conjunction ‘and’ is an endeavor on the part of the author to join and unite the broken, segregated and withering parts of societal fabrics during imperial rule. The author is aware of his social, cultural and historical legacy and glorious past; therefore, he uses most adjectives showing positive characteristics qualifying to the past, which imply that pre-colonial period was better than the chaos-ridden and the dilemma-driven present.

As far as the future is concerned, it is uncertain because the foreign rule has not allowed people and institutes to develop and

progress. Moreover, the removal of 'slabs' and 'stones' that embody colonial legacy is a challenge that these colonies have to undertake even after the formal end of colonial rule. However, it is a proven fact that many colonies, though independent now, are still struggling with this colonial legacy and mindset.

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