

A Stylistic Use of Adjectives in Aliyu Kamal's *Someone Somewhere*

By

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Abstract

This paper examines the stylistic use of adjectives in Aliyu Kamal's *Someone Somewhere* by using the Leech and Short (2007) model. The focus of the paper is to explore how adjectives are used as a lexical choice in the text to vividly describe the settings, characters and events in the novel. As a text-based study, the qualitative method is applied. Therefore, all the extracts analysed were obtained from the primary text. The paper reveals that Kamal uses more attributive modification than the predicative one in the novel and it is viewed that through the use of adjectives, the author paints a magnificent picture of his characters, their situations and settings which greatly enrich the novel and allow readers to sense, feel and be part and parcel of the imaginative world of the story.

Keywords: *Stylistics, Adjective, lexical choice, literary styles*

1.0 Introduction

In stylistics, the manner in which a writer chooses words to create a text and the method through which he expresses himself through writing constitutes the style. Style is very important tool for the writer to write both literary and non-literary work; it is the means of producing a specific effect of a text. By employing various stylistic devices, writers convey their ideas to readers. Against this background, this paper examines the use of adjective employed as a device in the novel in question.

So, this paper examines the use of adjectives in Aliyu Kamal's *Someone Somewhere* using the perspectives of Leech and Short's lexical and grammatical categories. Leech and Short (2007:61) argue that the study of style is simply undertaken as an exercise in describing what use is made of a language. They also stated that we normally study style because we want to

explain something. Generally, stylistics has the aim of exploring the relationship between language and artistic function.

The problem of this research is the realisation that the selected text for this study demonstrates a sophisticated deployment of adjective to develop the narrative structure of the text. However, such linguistic feature in the text is neglected by many critical works on Kamal, such as Shabba (2006), Zango (2010), Abdu (2013), Saje and Mahmud (2020), Saje and Mahmud (2021) and Saje, Mahmud and Bala (2022). This obviously creates a gap in the scholarship that the paper addresses. Thus, the paper aims at examining how adjectives are used as a lexical choice in the text to vividly describe the settings, characters and events in the novel

1.1 The Concepts of Style and Stylistics

1.1.0 Style

The concept of *Style* is debatable and means different things to different people as every writer has a unique way of expressing himself/herself through writing. Enkvist N. (1973:11) puts it, "as common as it is elusive. Most of us speak about it even lovingly, though few of us are willing to say precisely what it means." Many attempts have been made to define it. Abrams, M. H. and Harpham, G.G. (2012) state that traditionally, style can be defined as the mode of linguistic expression in verse or prose concerning writers or speakers who speak or say the language The analysis of specific style for a specific writer can be done in terms of aims, kinds of sentence patterns, choice of words etc.

Every individual has his peculiar ways of doing things. Style is the term used to capture this inherent human phenomenon, which is also applicable to one's distinctive mode of expression, both orally and in writing. The style of a writer (also known as 'idiolect') is, thus, his unique way or pattern of communicating his views, feelings or messages (Abubakar, 2017:185).

According to Leech and Short (2007:11), the word *style* refers to the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on. However, they feel that to be on the safest ground, it is better to think of style as “the linguistic characteristics of a particular text”. This is to say that *style* is an author’s unique way of communicating ideas. It is also the primary aspect of any literary piece of writing as well as the basic thing which gives uniqueness to every writer. Equally, it may be called the trademark of writer.

1.1.1 The Concept of Stylistics

Stylistics is the scientific study of style. It is the study of variations in language use. Stylistic is an aspect of linguistics that studies language variation informed by certain factors (Muniru, 2011:1). Widdowson (1975:21) identifies stylistics as dealing with literary discourse in a linguistic way. According to him, stylistics differs from literary criticism as well as from linguistics and that there exists a middle ground position between linguistics and literary criticism. The function of this middle ground is to mediate between the two. It connects between the two disciplines thus it has an interdisciplinary function. When limited to literary language, stylistics then is literary. When however, text for analysis are drawn from other fields, stylistics is linguistic, (Muniru, 2011:1). Enkvist (1973:92) consistently refers to linguistic stylistics as *stylolinguistics* in his book entitled *Linguistic Stylistics*. Stylolinguistic investigations rely on the rules of the language. Thus, Stylistics as an approach to language study investigates the varieties of language and accounts for choices made by individuals and writers in their language use.

According to Leech and Short (2007:11), Stylistics is simply defined as the (linguistic) study of style, which means the language use. They mention that style is usually studied to interpret something, but generally speaking, literary stylistics reveals the relation between language

and artistic function, covert or overt, which is the aim of the interpretation. Stylistics, as an aspect of literary study, emphasizes the analysis and interpretation of various elements of style.

Stylistics is also defined as the study of the varieties of language functions. This stems from the fact that different stylistic forms give language the varieties needed in order to make the language perform the various functions it is designed to perform. Hence, different fields portray different stylistic forms or stylistic variations. These variations depend on the occupation or the field a writer is depicting. Hence, a legal write up is significantly different from a medical write up, just as a literary or creative write up differs from that of scientific write up.

1.2 The Concept of Adjectives

In traditional terms, adjective modifies the meaning of the noun. It describes a person, place, quantity or a value. This definition is closely related with the submission of Finch, G. (2000:82) as thus: "Adjectives are words which specify the attributes of NOUNS. Typically, they give information about the size, colour, shape and appearance of entities." According to Crystal (2008), adjectives which might be abbreviated as (A, adj, ADJ) belong to the grammatical category of words referring to the main set of items which specify the attributes of nouns from a formal point of view. Crystal states that the narrow and broad presentations of the term "adjectives" will be found in grammars.

In formal terms, adjectives are usually defined by their distribution, that is, where they can occur in word strings. We characteristically find them in two places: first, in an attributive position within a noun PHRASE, as in *the lovely book*; and secondly, in a post-verbal, or predicative position, as in *The book is lovely*. Adjectives which can occur in both of these positions are termed central. We can think of these as prototypical adjectives (Finch, 2000:83)

In each language, adjectives are vital components of sentences. Utilizing adjectives implies that we can express the nature of any individual or item. Without descriptive words, it is hard to explain how things look like. Thus, adjectives are the bedrock of successful description. That is to say, they play a significant role in sentence construction.

Some of the kinds of adjectives, as identified by Murthy, J. D. (2007:33), are:

Adjective of Quality

Adjective of Quantity

Adjective of Number

Distributive Adjective

Exclamatory Adjective

Proper Adjective, etc

Adjective of Quality is used to talk about the quality of a person or thing. Example, “He is a poor person.” Adjective of Quantity is used to talk about the quantity of things. Example, “There is little water in the jug.” Adjective of Number is used to talk about the number of things or persons. Example, “I got first class in my B. A.” Distributive Adjective is used to point out noun in a group. Example, Each boy has a uniform. Exclamatory Adjective employs the word ‘what’ to show wonder or surprise. Example, what an insult! Proper Adjective is an adjective derived from a proper name, example, “Nigerian President.”

Empirically, Shuaibu and Emmanuel (2013) conduct a stylistic analysis of the syntactic features and cohesive devices in the columnists’ use of English language in Nigerian newspapers. The study discovered dependent clauses, simple, compound and complex sentences were the major syntactic features of the corpus. Among them, compound and complex sentences dominated the style of the columnists. The work of Giwa and Iya (2016) is *The Use of Adjectives in the Advertisements of edible Products*. The findings reveal that colour adjectives have the highest level of occurrence because they are used to distinguish the

product from other such products in the market. Abdu (2018) comparatively investigates the style of Abubakar Gimba's *Sacred Apples* and Aliyu Kamal's *King of the Boys*. The findings of the study noted that both Kamal and Gimba converged in the use of simple, compound, complex and compound complex sentences. Nonetheless, the novelists diverged in the use of rhetorical questions, elliptical constructions and fragments which are used stylistically by Gima, whereas, most of the Kamal sentences were declarative and straightforward. The research further revealed, *King of the Boys* can be regarded as a descriptive novel because Kamal uses large portion of adjectival clauses while *Sacred Apple* is more of narrative because adjectival clauses are rarely used. Using a simple random sampling technique Zubairu et al (2020) conduct a morpho-stylistic analysis of crisis motivated words in online newspaper headlines of Kogi state election of 2019. The findings of the study noted that the morphological formations dominant in the headlines that are capable of motivating crisis were compounding and neologisms or coinages, which marked the linguistic habit of either the editors or the authors. Aminu (2023) studies the use of verb phrase in its sentential aspect, as used in Giwa's *I'd Rather Die* and Kamal's *Someone Somewhere* to depict a successful rheme in the selected descriptive sentences from the two novels. The paper has discovered that both the two novels use intransitive, transitive, ditransitive, transitive locative and ditransitive locative at different degrees with similar or different VP structures. Copular verb is only used in Giwa's novel. Moreover, it has also noticed that intransitive locative too could be manipulated in prose writing. This paper is justifiable, because none of the above critical works focus on the stylistic use of adjective of the selected text.

2.0 Methodology

The paper uses qualitative method as its methodology. Hence, it is a text-based research which depends on written materials as sources of data. All the data were collected from the primary and secondary sources. Qualitative research is a research that analyzes data that are descriptive and not numerical. This type of research often involves the study of behavior and

reasons behind it, which cannot be analyzed through statistics, and should be interpreted with the usage of qualitative means (Haruna, 2010). Thus, a qualitative approach is an analytical research methodology which involves description. As such, this paper used qualitative approach for data collection and data analysis.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

As the paper centered on a stylistic study of the use of adjectives, Leech and Short model (2007) is used as Theoretical framework. These scholars believe that every stylistic analysis involves selecting some features, and ignoring others. It is a highly selective exercise, which may be one feature or a number of features. The stylistic selection involves the relation between the significances of a text and the linguistic characteristics in which the significances are manifest. As such, Leech and Short (2007:61) provide checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories as thus:

- A. Lexical Categories: i) *general*, ii) *nouns*, iii) *adjectives*, iv) *verbs*, v) *adverbs*.
- B. Grammatical Category: (i) *sentence types*, (ii) *sentence complexity*, (iii) *clause types*, iv) *clause structure*, v) *noun phrases*, vi) *verb phrases*, vii) *other phrase types*, viii) *word classes*, ix) *general* – here, note any general types of grammatical construction used to special effect.
- C. Figures of Speech: i) *grammatical and lexical schemes*, ii) *phonological_schemes*, iii) *tropes*.
- D. Context and Cohesion: consider ways in which one part of a text is linked to another (cohesion) and whether the writer addresses the reader directly, or through the words or thoughts of some other character.

Therefore, this paper focuses on lexical categories to analyse the choice of adjectives as a style by the author of *Someone Somewhere*.

3.0 Synopsis of the Novel

Someone Somewhere (2018), contains 141 pages and 27 chapters. The novel, which is set in a village (Himma), near Kano, is a compelling social realist novel that satirically explores the moral, economic, and institutional decay in the contemporary Hausa Muslim society, where the innocent suffers, the corrupt flourishes, disillusionment nurtures and redemption remains elusive. The novel narrates the tragic journey of Sa'idu; a young man raised and educated up to the university level by his impoverished uncle, Malam Adamu. During his university life, Sa'idu serves as a fertile breeding ground for all sorts of immoral acts. He shamelessly abandons his uncle, Malam Adamu even at the point of death! After his graduation and subsequent employment as a customs officer as well as his eventual elevation to the prestigious position of Comptroller of Customs, Sa'idu is consumed by corruption and moral degeneracy. He plans and succeeds in the murder of his predecessor (Comptroller of Customs Musa) and secretary (Mary). The death of Mary compels his exile, after he is declared wanted by the police. Thematically, the novel focuses on the deep-rooted corruption within public institutions, filial ingratitude, institutional corruption, educational collapse, sexual abuse, forced marriage, and victimization of women, especially in a working environment by their male superiors.

3.1 Stylistic Use of Adjectives in *Someone Somewhere*

In painting a picture or describing the characters' situations and happenings in the novel, Kamal uses adjectives both attributively and predicatively. An adjective is used attributively when it appears before a noun and modifies it within the noun phrase, e.g. i. a silent night, ii. a brilliant student. According to Randolph Quirk et al., attributive adjectives function as premodifiers of the head noun. Conversely, adjective is used predicatively when it occurs after a linking verb and functions as a subject complement, e.g. i. The night is silent. ii. The student seems brilliant.

Adjectives in *Someone Somewhere*

Attributive	Predicative
very strong man (p. 57)	Batula was light-skinned (p.20)
Binta met a kind and married thirty-year-old Secretary (p.99).	He didn't blame himself for becoming abjectly poor. (p.11)
the superior officer's Sartorial dash (p.100)	Larai yawned, feeling very tired. (p.15)
that quiet and unassuming man (p.104)	Malam Adamu had been sick and bedridden (p.59)
a light-skinned girl into the court (p.127)	It is very shameful (p.36)
youngest daughter (p.3)	Larai yawned, feeling very tired. (15)
All but a half-burnt wick (p.15)	She became very unpopular (26)
The recumbent old man (p.59)	She was afraid (62)
Her swanky house. (p.27)	
The worthless and amoral old man! (p.28)	
Larai gave out a loud piercing cry (p.74)	
Teary-faced Maryam (p.138)	
Red blazing coals (p.28)	
The beautiful and attractive girls (p.36)	
His tattered jeans (p.43)	
Its old buildings (p.17)	
Its wooden chalkboard(p.17)	
The dusty floor (p.17)	
The thin-looking officer (p.56)	

As shown above, it is vivid that Kamal uses more attributive modification than the predicative one in his novel *Someone Somewhere*. Through the use of adjectives, Kamal graphically portrays most of his characters. He gives readers a clear description and conceptualisation of the characters, as regards their appearance. For example, in page 57, Batula was described as *light-skinned and of medium build with hair*. Also, Barau is described in the novel as a *very strong man, 'bald and bulbously reddish-eyed'*. (p57). Here, the writer uses adjectives of quality to cinematically create a portrait of the characters. This instils in the reader's mind, the mental pictures of Batula and Barau.

Moreover, through Kamal's use of adjectives in *Someone Somewhere*, the reader can sense and feel as well as grasp the kind of feelings and conditions of the characters in the novel because of the powerful effects of the describing words, which suggest that the quality they convey is attached to the noun they described. This can be captured in many places in the novel:

Malam Adamu leaned back and rested his head against his rickety deck-chair. He felt a sharp pain surge down his spine... the chair most of whose nails had become loose or fallen out made a loud jarring sound as if in protest (p.2).

By now, Malam Adamu had been sick and bedridden for a month. The recumbent old man was breathing with difficulty (p.59).

The above excerpts depict how Kamal uses adjectives to vividly portray the miserable condition Malam Adamu, an old man, who lives hand-to-mouth and has nobody to give him a helping hand being living in a highly materialistic society.

Moreover, Kamal, through the use of adjectives rightly depicts the predicaments of some of his female characters in the patriarchal northern Nigerian society as thus:

Larai gave out a loud piercing cry, asking them to bring back her husband, who had died (p.74).

Larai let out a heart-rending cry and felt down unconscious (p.80).

Her mother must be unduly worried and agitated that she had still not returned home (p.87).

Teary-faced Maryam kept quiet and listened to the two friends. She resisted joining the talk out of the fear of making Sa'idu so angry as to risk his flying out without her (p.138).

4.0 Conclusion

This paper analyzed the stylistic use of adjectives in Aliyu Kamal's *Someone Somewhere*. The research is conducted through Leech and Short's lexical categories which deal with nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. The paper finds out that Kamal deploys stylistically more attributive modification than the predicative one.

Through careful selection of appropriate adjectives, the author does not only ornament the novel and allow the reader to have in their mind an imagined or mental creation of the characters or situations described, but also allows the reader to be a part and parcel of the fictional world of the novel/

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