

A Comprehensive Lexico-Syntactic Analysis Of Stylistic Devices In Ernest Hemingway's «The Old Man And The Sea»

Amirkulova Sugdiyona Yokubjon qizi

Master's student of the University of Economics and Pedagogy
Karshi city, Republic of Uzbekistan

Abstract

This article offers a thorough lexico-syntactical examination of Ernest Hemingway's use of stylistic elements in «The Old Man and the Sea». The study focuses on Hemingway's unique minimalist style and examines how the rhythm and tone of the story are improved by his use of syntactical devices like parataxis, repetition, and polysyndeton. The lexical analysis emphasizes Hemingway's purposeful use of monosyllabic words and straightforward, tangible terminology, which adds to the setting's and characters' realism.

Key words: lexico-syntactical analysis, stylistic devices, minimalist style, parataxis, repetition, polysyndeton, monosyllabic vocabulary, concrete language, realism

Introduction. A masterpiece of 20th-century literature, Ernest Hemingway's novella «The Old Man and the Sea» perfectly captures his unique writing style of understatement, clarity, and simplicity. A lexico-syntactical analysis shows how Hemingway uses stylistic methods to convey the human spirit's tenacity, provoke emotion, and add depth. This research explores Hemingway's use of syntax and vocabulary, revealing how these elements support the novella's distinctive style and depth of meaning.

Methodology. Hemingway's use of straightforward, tangible, and approachable language is well known. His use of language in «The Old Man and the Sea» enhances realism and emotional resonance by reflecting the ordinary life of a fisherman.

Plain and Everyday Lexis: Hemingway avoids ornate or abstract vocabulary. Words like "fish," "boat," "sea," "man," and "line" recur frequently, grounding the narrative in a specific and tangible reality. Hemingway's lexical style in «The Old Man and the Sea» is deceptively simple. He utilizes concrete nouns and basic adjectives, which mirror the straightforward nature of Santiago's life and environment.

Results. Monosyllabic and Polysyllabic Balance: Though his language is simple, Hemingway occasionally introduces polysyllabic terms (e.g., "phosphorescence") to create moments of poetic elevation, especially when describing nature.

Semantic Fields: The novel's lexicon draws heavily from the semantic fields of:

Maritime vocabulary: "skiff," "current," "mast," "harpoon," "gaff"

Natural elements: "ocean," "sun," "stars," "wind," "bone," "blood"

Physical suffering: "pain," "cramp," "cut," "bleed," "strain," showing Santiago's physical ordeal

Spiritual strength: Words like "faith," "hope," "luck," "defeat," and "pride" suggest inner struggle and strength

Use of Names and Terms of Affection: The use of "Manolin" and repeated references to "the boy" signify emotional closeness. The use of "fish" vs. "the fish" changes depending on Santiago's perception of his prey — sometimes it's a rival, sometimes a companion.

Repetition for Emphasis: Lexical repetition is a hallmark of Hemingway's style. The repeated use of "fish," "line," and "boy" not only reinforces central themes but also mirrors the protagonist's obsessive thoughts and mental rhythm.

Symbolic Lexical Fields: Despite their simplicity, words in the novel carry symbolic weight. The "sea" symbolizes both nature's beauty and cruelty, while the "fish" represents a personal challenge or quest

Discussion. In «The Old Man and the Sea», Hemingway's syntax is just as important to his writing. He primarily employs simple, compound, and paratactic sentences, which are indicative of internal

monologue and oral storytelling. Simple Sentences: The narrative is dominated by brief, declarative sentences. They project an air of clarity and objectivity. For instance, “He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream.”

Hemingway’s syntax works in tandem with his lexis to support tone, theme, and character psychology. SVO Dominance (Subject-Verb-Object): Hemingway typically sticks to the basic English clause structure. This contributes to the feeling of directness and clarity. For example: “The old man carried the mast on his shoulder.”

Rhythmic Repetition: Repetition of syntactic patterns mirrors ritualistic, meditative thought, often echoing Santiago's routines: “He watched the flying fish. They were his principal friends on the ocean.”

Pauses and Pacing: The sparing use of commas and preference for “and” affects pacing. There’s a slow, deliberate rhythm that aligns with Santiago’s pace at sea.

Syntactic Economy: Sentences are stripped of excess. There is a resistance to embellishment, which is itself a stylistic decision aligning with Hemingway's minimalist philosophy: “It was cold after the sun went down and the old man’s sweat dried cold on his back and his arms.”

Hemingway's usage of parataxis frequently involves placing clauses next to one another without using subordinating conjunctions. The rhythm of speech and thought is reflected in this syntactic simplicity: “He was asleep in a short time and he dreamed of Africa when he was a boy and the long golden beaches.”

Polysyndeton: The frequent use of conjunctions, particularly “and,” slows down the writing and conveys the protagonist's emotional and mental states. It also conjures up feelings of struggle and accumulation: “He was shivering with the morning cold. But he knew he would shiver himself warm and that soon he would be rowing.”

Polysyndeton: Common in action sequences or emotional reflection: “He ate the dolphin slowly and drank a little water. The sky was clouding over to the east and one line, already, was almost straight down.”

Asyndeton: Used for rapid motion or tension: “He took all his pain and what was left of his strength and his long gone pride and he put it against the fish’s agony.

Absence of Subordination: It is uncommon to find complex sentences with several subordinate clauses. This helps to create a simple, unadorned tone that captures the protagonist's way of life and attitude.

Stylistic Lexico-Syntactical Devices. Hemingway's style methods gently express meaning and emotion by combining lexical and syntactical elements: Anaphora is the emphasis-driven repetition of words or phrases at the start of clauses or sentences. Example: “He was an old man who fished alone... He had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish... He was thin and gaunt...”. Parallelism: Structural repetition enhances rhythm and reinforces ideas. Example: “The sail was patched with flour sacks and, furled, it looked like the flag of permanent defeat.”

Ellipsis: When words that are implied by context are left out, it conveys a sense of directness and immediacy. Antithesis: To create impact, opposing ideas are positioned next to each other. For example, Santiago views the water as both a merciless foe and a protective mother.

Parallelism and Contrast: “But man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated.”

Ellipsis: Often used in dialogue or monologue to mirror thought processes. “If the boy were here. If the boy were here.”

Antithesis: Reflects thematic dualities—man vs. nature, pride vs. humility, success vs. failure: “He is my brother. But I must kill him.”. Despite his sparse use of figurative language, Hemingway occasionally employs similes and metaphors to improve meaning and description. Example: “The fish’s eye looked as detached as the mirrors in a periscope or as a saint in a procession.”

Internal monologue and dialogue. «The Old Man and the Sea» 's dialogue is characterized by its genuineness and simplicity. Hemingway makes use of: Direct Speech: Character-revealing and intimate dialogue that is naturalistic. Internal Monologue: Readers can experience Santiago's inner world without too much narrative because his thoughts are frequently expressed in direct speech or free indirect discourse. Hemingway’s treatment of speech reveals Santiago’s isolation and deep interior world. Dialogue as External Reflection of Thought: Dialogue often mirrors Santiago’s internal monologue. Since he is often alone, he speaks to himself, the sea, the fish, or to God.

Orality and Simplicity: The spoken sentences mimic natural speech patterns, especially through the use of contractions, short sentences, and rhetorical questions.

Spiritual Dialogue: Santiago sometimes talks to God, reflecting both faith and desperation.

Conclusion. Thematic Function and Stylistic Impact. «The Old Man and the Sea» 's general lexico-syntactical style helps to: Realism: The story feels genuine and approachable because of the straightforward language. Psychological Insight: Readers learn about Santiago's tenacity, loneliness, and philosophical perspective through parataxis and repetition. Symbolic Depth: Simple actions and objects take on symbolic value when interpreted in a more profound way thanks to the restrained approach. In «The Old Man and the Sea» by Ernest Hemingway, lexico-syntactical stylistic elements are expertly employed. With careful word choice and sentence construction, Hemingway creates a story that is both straightforward and profound. The protagonist's stoicism is reflected in his style, which also strengthens thematic resonance and establishes his status as a literary minimalist whose nuanced skills never cease to enthrall readers and academics.

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