



ORCID of the Journal: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-0723-9485>

DOI Number of the Paper: <https://zenodo.org/records/12678343>

Edition Link: [Journal of Academic Research for Humanities JARH, 4\(3\) Jul-Sep 2024](https://jar.bwo-researches.com/index.php/jarh/article/view/465)

Link of the Paper: <https://jar.bwo-researches.com/index.php/jarh/article/view/465>

HJRS Link: [Journal of Academic Research for Humanities JARH \(HEC-Recognized for 2023-2024\)](https://jar.bwo-researches.com/index.php/jarh/article/view/465)

CRAFTING MEANING: STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF OCTAVIA BUTLER'S SPEECH SOUNDS

Author 1:	EMAAN KHALIL, Student, Department of English, Institute of Management Sciences, Peshawar, Pakistan, Email; emaankhalil575@gmail.com .
Corresponding & Co-Author 2:	DR. SABEEN, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Institute of Management Sciences, Peshawar, Pakistan, Email; Sabeen.hayat@imsciences.edu.pk .
Co-Author 3:	DR. JAVERIA ASHFAQ BHATTI, Assistant Professor, Department of English, National University of Modern Language, Islamabad, Pakistan, Email; jharoon@numl.edu.pk

Paper Information

Citation of the paper:

(JARH) Khalil, E, Sabeen., & Bhatti. J. A., (2024). Crafting Meaning: Stylistic Analysis of Octavia Butler's Speech Sounds. In *Journal of Academic Research for Humanities*, 4(3), 23–36B.

QR Code for the Paper:



Abstract

The present study presents a detailed stylistic analysis of the short story "Speech Sounds" by Octavia Butler focusing on how various linguistic techniques are employed to convey certain themes through the narrative. It uses Simpson and Levenston's model of modal systems for stylistic analysis of the story. It involves investigating the use of modal verbs, auxiliaries, modal adverbs, lexical-modal auxiliaries, and punctuations in the short story to identify the author's distinct style in building her characteristic narrative and imparting main themes. A mixed method approach is used for textual and content analysis of the text respectively, enhancing the depth and breadth of understanding in research. The analysis highlights how the author's stylistic choices enhance the story's emotional impact and thematic depth. The findings of the application of the Simpson model show that owing to a high occurrence of an epistemic modal system, the narrative attains a negative shade. The narrator appears to lack confidence in comprehending the situations and ongoing events and seems to depend on situations external to the story world. The stylistic analysis of linguistic items including vocabulary and punctuation has helped explore how recent literary devices such as polysyndeton, asyndeton, and hypophora contribute to building the narrative of the story. The study concludes that writers may use different linguistic techniques to convey the desired themes. The study enriches the academic discourse on Butler's works. It also reveals how linguistic choices shape readers' perceptions, affirming the value of stylistic scrutiny in revealing nuanced layers of meaning within texts.

Keywords: Stylistic, Simpson, Levenston, literary, Speech.

Subject Areas for JARH:

- 1 Language & Literature
- 2 Humanities

Timeline of the Paper at JARH:

Received on: 8-05-24
 Reviews Completed on: 27-06-24
 Accepted on: 3-07-24
 Online on 13-07-24

License:



[Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

Recognized for BWO-R:



Published by BWO Researches INTL:



DOI Image of the paper:

DOI [10.5281/zenodo.12678343](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12678343)

Introduction

The current study presents a stylistic analysis of the dystopian science-fiction short story "Speech Sounds" by Octavia E. Butler to explore and comprehend how the use of various linguistic techniques is employed to convey the narrative's central themes. Baroudi (2019-2020) states that the working of linguistic features of texts acts as a bridge between linguistics and literary criticism. The study examines the use of syntax, diction, and narrative structure to reveal the intricate methods Butler uses to reveal the central themes of the narrative. Butler is an African American author particularly known for her science-fiction novels and short stories. "Speech Sounds" is her critically acclaimed work from her collection "Bloodchild and Other Stories". It was initially published in Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine in 1983 and won the Hugo Award for Best Science Fiction in 1983.

This story is told using a third-person limited point of view narration due to which readers observe and introspect Rye's thoughts and actions as they proceed with reading the story. The protagonist, Rye, associates the happenings in the story with the real nature of a pandemic that causes destruction, and in this case, it has resulted in the loss of language around the world depicted in the story followed by the malfunction of the civilization ([Coursehero.com](https://www.coursehero.com), 2021). This short story attempts to reveal the importance of language and how the loss of words can contribute to chaos and demolition in society.

The study aims to delve into an analysis of the short story "Speech Sounds" from the perspective of linguistics. Superficial analysis of semantic, lexical, graphological, and grammatical, a part of pragmatics and deixis are noticeable, and the narrator has also employed digression as a stylistic device.

Using Paul Grice's concept of cooperative principle dominated by maxims of quantity, quality, manner, and relation for a meaningful

and understandable conversation, it has been observed that these maxims are violated and flouted in the story world of "Speech Sound" to a state where no conversation is carried. Also, it becomes evident that the story world is ridden by sign language deprivation, with pernicious consequences of the formation of a completely dystopian society where gestures are the major means of communication, a form of communication that remains susceptible to misinterpretations. The use of gender-sensitive language reflecting differences in the characters' social standing and their power hierarchy makes the dominant theme of the story. The mixed-method approach is used to analyze the content of the text. Simpson's model for finding the different types of modalities in the text and Levenston's modal for analyzing the punctuations in the text are used as a theoretical framework.

Inspired by her real-life situation, Butler seeks to use deictic expressions, conceptual metonymy, and stasis techniques to craft the drama of the story, which began with a bad stare, was heightened by a gender-polarized gesture, led to a fight in the bus, and ended in a growing hopelessness and purposelessness.

Problem Statement

Many studies have been conducted to identify the various linguistic devices that authors use for special effects in their literary works. Similarly, short stories have also been stylistically analyzed. However, "Speech Sounds" by Butler has not been investigated for the literary and stylistic devices that are used in this story. The story is unique in its sense for various reasons; for example, it makes use of language to depict language disorders and disfluencies. Often verbal language is held responsible for the disorder and delinquencies in society. Verbal language is always haunted because of its expressive nature but the aftermath of both verbal language and nonverbal language is somehow equal as both generate chaos and disorganize the structure of society if they are not communicated and

comprehended properly. The element that is of foremost concern is mutual intelligibility between the people. In this research, the nature of the narrator by understanding the shade of the story through Simpson's modal system is explored.

Significance of the Study

By exploring linguistic techniques used in "Speech Sounds" by Octavia Butler, the current study demonstrates the broader application of stylistic analysis in uncovering deeper meanings in literary works. In this way, the study contributes to literary scholarship on Butler and offers a valuable framework for interpreting short stories. It provides insights for scholars, educators, and writers by highlighting the importance of linguistic choices and techniques employed in narratives.

Research Objectives

The current inquest is to:

- i. Identify the linguistic, stylistic, and literary devices used in the short story "Speech Sounds".
- ii. Examine the interpretation of the identified devices.
- iii. Study the punctuations used in a text for its graphological analysis.
- iv. Identify the shade of the story through Simpson's model of modality.

Research Questions

The study seeks to address the following research inquiries:

- i. What are the linguistic and stylistic features in Butler's "Speech Sounds" that contribute to the construction of the narrative and its central themes?
- ii. How is the uncertainty of the author determined by looking at the modal verbs in the text?
- iii. What patterns and variations in punctuation usage can be identified through graphological analysis of different types of texts?
- iv. How can Simpson's model of modality be applied to identify the narrative tone and perspective in modern fiction?

Summary of the Story

In "Speech Sounds," by Octavia Butler, Rye moves through a post-epidemic society where speech is impaired. She meets an LAPD officer, Obsidian, and they form a bond. Obsidian is killed protecting a woman, and Rye adopts two surviving-speaking children.

Literature Review

2.1. Stylistics and its development

Also referred to as literary linguistics (Burke, 2014), stylistics is an interdiscursive practice that aims at the study and analysis of how language in a text, particularly literary texts, works. It is regarded as an art that involves a combination of literature and linguistics and aims to produce persuasive texts (Abed, 2019; Stavans, Zadunaisku, 2023).

Stylistics serve as a means of communication and as a means of shaping an individual's thoughts. According to Paul Simpson, a stylistician, it is "in stylistics [that] the primacy of place is attributed to language" (Simpson, 2004). By closely scrutinizing the specific structure of a text and its linguistic peculiarities, stylistics aids in comprehending the internal structure and functions of language (Toolan, M. 1998). Its goal is to manifest patterns in a style that has an impact on the readers' insights and combines the elements of literary and linguistic interpretation essential for understanding (Craig, H. 2004; Toolan, M. 1998). Widdowson views stylistics as "the study of literary discourse from a linguistics orientation" (Widdowson, 2014). The functional significance of a text offers a pathway for its interpretation, underscoring the notion that linguistic features lack meaningfulness when isolated from their broader textual context (Hassan, Bano, & Tabassum, 2015). Hence, linguistic features are analyzed in its context in the present study.

2.2. Stylistic Analysis of Literary and Non-Literary Texts

Both literary and non-literary texts are analyzed stylistically in various texts.

2.2.1 Non-Literary text

Pamphlets, newspapers, letters, and magazines are some of the forms of non-literary texts that are often stylistically analyzed. Recent famous studies on nonliterary texts include (i) stylistic analysis of the excerpts from the newspaper article "Bringing up a Better Baby and Goodbye to Dr. Spock)" (Moscow City University of Education), (ii) David Crystal's stylistic analysis of plaint letters in legal proceedings and legal documents, and (iii) stylistic analysis of signs and symbols used in everyday life such as "NO LEFT TURN".

These studies involve analyses of the auxiliary verbs, prepositions, articles, use of formal and informal language, juxtaposition of colloquial language with learned vocabulary items, amalgamation of formal and informal words, imperatives, sentences lacking subject and verbs, use of capitals for emphasis, punctuations, and the length of the sentences. The aim is to study how language and its syntax contribute to the semantic peculiarities of the text being presented.

2.2.2 Literary text

"Stylistics is a study of the amalgamation of form with content" (Niazi, 2013; Zamna, Ahmad, Bisma, 2023). Many literary texts such as poems, short stories, prose, and novels are stylistically analyzed. For example, stylistic analysis of two significant novels, Elif Shafak's "Forty Rules of Love" and D.H. Lawrence's "Sons and Lovers" have exemplary place in literary circles. Stylistic analysis of literary texts focuses on analyses of various linguistic elements such as figures of speech, lexis, syntax, phonology, figurative language, cohesion, and coherence (Zibin, Solopova, 2024). It involves an examination of various figures of speech, including simile, metaphor, anaphora, alliteration, oxymoron, onomatopoeia, content analysis (Latif, Rasheed, & Ziarat, 2020), discourse analysis, lexical analysis, analysis of the complex and diverse range of vocabularies such as adjectives, adverbs, neologisms, collocations, lexical sets, compound words,

polysyllabic, and monosyllabic words, punctuations and meaningful pauses etc. The aim is to uncover concealed meanings embedded in the literary texts.

2.3 Stylistic Analysis

It involves analysis of a language used in the text at several levels, a few of which are named below:

2.3.1 Graphology

Analysis of the graphic aspects of language forms another important aspect of stylistic study. First coined in 1961 by a British linguist and academic, Angus McIntosh, graphology emerged as a tool for analyzing handwriting. A Dictionary of Stylistics defines graphology, or graphemics, as "the study of graphemes and any other element connected to the written medium" (Wales, 1989). Many books have been written on the subject of graphology such as Rosa Baugham's book *Character Indicated by Handwriting* and Child Psychologist, William Peyer's book *The Physiology of Writing* (Shah, 2022). Graphology helps in finding answers to questions of written language by analyzing spellings, punctuations, paragraphing, spacing, size of the print, capitalization, different layouts, typefaces, etc. (Wales, 1989) and other graphic aspects of language.

2.3.2 Modality

With roots in Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (1960), Modality is considered the construction of meaning through grammar structures. It is another means of stylistic analysis and helps in understanding the speaker's viewpoint or evaluation of the content and speech function (Suhadi, 2011) within a clause. It encompasses the speaker's assessment and the logical deductions they make. Iwamoto, on the other hand, highlights modality as a significant linguistic mechanism for fulfilling the interpersonal function and conveying social roles between the speaker and the listener (Xu, Zhuang, Blair, et. al. 2023). Modality serves as a crucial tool in expressing opinions, and judgments and establishing a

dynamic relationship between the addresser and the addressee.

2.3.3 Literary devices

Analysis of polysyndeton (Hamza & Abbood, 2020) is another strategy for the stylistic study of a text. The term "polysyndeton" is derived from a Greek word where "poly" means many, "syn" means together, and "det" means to link or bind. Thus, it is employed by the writer to link conjunctions together that are used in a list of words to foreground the augmentation of the list (Hamza & Abbood, 2020). According to Farnsworth (2011), the various functions of the use of polysyndeton in a text include (i) making the text sound rhythmic, (ii) determining the pace of the utterance by adding an extra conjunction to either slow down or speed up its pace, (iii) emphasize every item in the text. The study of asyndeton forms an important part of a stylistic study of a text. Asyndeton refers to a compact version of a text that results in creating an immediate impact on the reader to connect directly to what a writer is saying (Samina, Rabia, Syed, 2023). In asyndeton, conjunctions are omitted but this omission does not cause confusion as a pause appears in the form of a comma, colon, or semicolon in the text. Hypophora is a rhetorical device where a series of questions are raised by the speaker and the same speaker answers or responds to their questions (American Rhetoric: Rhetorical Figures in Sound, n.d.). The purpose of hypophora is to stimulate the curiosity of the reader and answer questions that might not be considered by the reader while reading the text.

2.4 Short story and its brief history

A short story is a concise fictional prose narrative that is characterized by its brevity compared to a novel and its limited number of characters (Hansen, 2022). Being accepted as a separate genre during the first half of the 20th century, short stories are often favored for their traditional simplicity and for providing concise narratives that could be easily understood and enjoyed by a wide range of readers. Many research papers have been published on the

stylistic analysis of short stories such as "Thank You, Ma'am" by Langston Hughes and "Good Country People" by Mary Flannery O'Connor. Stylistic analyses of these works include analyses of the figures of speech employed, repetition or parallelism, phonological schemes such as alliteration, simile, metaphor, and tropes, personification, hyperbole, etc. These and other such studies help in understanding and comprehending the techniques employed by writers to understand the message being aimed at. The present study, however, is more focused on analyzing the minor symbols used in the short stories that are often given little importance.

2.5 "Speech Sounds"

The story has been analyzed by some studies but with a different perspective. For instance, a chapter, "Stylistic Techniques and Ethical Staging in Octavia Butler's Speech Sounds", in the book *The Ethics and Poetics of Alterity: New Perspectives on Genre Literature* (Rospide & Sorlin, 2015) stylistically analyzes parts of speech such as verbs, adjectives, adverbs, figurative languages such as juxtaposition, and phonological features such as squawked, screamed, and grunted.

In short, Speech Sounds have been analyzed stylistically in some but this study specifically investigates the graphological level of text by analyzing the punctuations, contracted forms, hyphens, dashes, and unusual capitalization in a text.

Methodology

3.1. Research Paradigm

A mixed method, which involves collecting data and analyzing it through qualitative and quantitative research design is used in the present study. Qualitative analysis which is an exploratory research technique (Latif, Rasheed, & Ziarat, 2020) involves reading and interpreting the text through textual analysis whereas quantitative analysis involves content analysis of the text using Paul Simpson's system of modality.

3.2. Data

"Speech Sounds" by Butler serves as a sample and primary data for the study and the research articles and studies conducted by researchers serve as secondary data for the current study.

3.3. Data Analysis

The analysis of the whole text of the story stylistically is one of the data analysis techniques used in the story. Close reading for identifying the literary devices in the text, textual analysis for analyzing the punctuation marks in the text, and content analysis for quantifying the content of the text to determine the style of the author are some of the other data analysis techniques used in the story.

3.4. Theoretical Framework

The current research paper is analyzed stylistically by looking at the graphological level of text using the Levenston model proposed in 1992 that talks about the graphical representation of language into four different levels which are spelling, punctuation, typography, and layout of the text (Gomez-Jimenez, *Graphology as a Linguistic Level of Analysis: Definition, Theoretical Background and Proposals for Categorization*, 2015). However, this research paper analyzes the punctuation in the text of the short story "Speech Sounds".

3.4.1 Simpson Modal System

Simpson suggests that the essence of a text is attributable to the type of point of view of the author or the interests of the author. In other words, a writer's or speaker's particular style of conceiving a worldview is indicated by the point of view he/she adopts (Abdullah & Abood, 2016). He came up with the modal system that expresses the connection between the systems of modality and non-lexical concepts which are epistemic, deontic, perception, and boulomaic modality. He also characterized modalities into different shades and the term "shading" is equivalent to the mode or particular style of the author (Iwamoto, 1998). However, in this research study, the main focus is on epistemic and deontic modality and to find out how these

two types of modal systems contribute to the shade of the story. The shade of the story which is the style of the author is observed through the modal verbs and auxiliaries in the short story "Speech Sounds".

i. Epistemic modality

The word "epistemic", derived from the Greek word "episteme", means knowledge (Suhadi, 2011). Epistemic knowledge refers to the knowledge of the speaker about a particular proposition. How much a speaker is confident about the truth of a certain proposition is what epistemic modality talks about (Parina & Leon, 2014). The three grades for evaluating the truth of a speaker's knowledge about a proposition are probable, possible, and certain. Thus, epistemic modality evaluates the speaker's confidence based on the above three degrees.

ii. Deontic modality

The term "deontic" also has its origin in the Greek word "deont" which means the modality of obligation and permission (Suhadi, 2011). This modal system refers to the scale of commitment attached to the duty performed by the speaker (Parina & Leon, 2014). It points out the degrees of proposition whether the command of the proposition is permissible, obligatory, or advisable.

3.4.2 Simpson's Point of View

Simpson made a distinction between two kinds of narrative namely "Category A" and "Category B" narratives (Abood, 2018). The B-category narrative is more complex than the A-category narrative. Category A narrative includes the first-person point of view where the character is participating in the story whereas Category B includes third person point of view where the characters are not participating in the narrative in a sense that the narrator's opinion is only limited to one person's perspective, feelings, and thoughts. These narratives possess three types of shading depending upon the type of modality identified in the text which are positive shading, negative shading, and neutral shading (Abood, 2018).

i. Positive shading

It is a kind of narrative in which the deontic and subsystem of the deontic, the boulomaic system, are prominent and the narrator or the speaker's desire, obligation, duty, and opinion are highlighted (Abood, 2018).

ii. **Negative shading**

The epistemic modal system is prominent in this kind of narrative. This kind of narrative contains a character or narrator who is perplexed and thus utters linguistic expressions of discontentment and whose understanding depends upon outside signals and appearances (Abood, 2018).

iii. **Neutral Shading**

Neutral shading is a kind of narrative in which there is an absence of narratorial modality and the story is described through categorical assertions (Abood, 2018).

Analysis And Discussions

The analysis is done using the Levenston Model in which he talks about four levels of graphology whereas this research study focuses on only one level which is stylistically analyzing the punctuations used in the text.

4.1 Literary devices in the short story "Speech Sounds"

4.1.1 Polysyndeton

Polysyndeton refers to the reiteration of conjunctions in a sentence. The polysyndeton in the short story "Speech Sounds" is stylistically analyzed by looking at the conjunctions in the text (Zibin, Khalifah, Altakhaineh, 2024). The following examples show the repetition of conjunctions in a sentence that refers to polysyndeton.

(i) She watched the two carefully, knowing the fight would begin when someone's nerve broke *or* someone's hand slipped *or* someone came to the end of his limited ability to communicate (p. 3).

The repetitive occurrence of the conjunctions "and" and "or" in the above sentences shows the literary device "polysyndeton" and these conjunctions are repeated to add sing-song rhythm to the sentences and emphasize items in the sentence

as in the sentence, "He tapped his mouth and forehead and shook his head", the "mouth", "forehead", and "head" are highlighted and composed in a rhythmic style.

4.1.2 Asyndeton

In comparison to polysyndeton in which words are repeated, asyndeton refers to the omission of words in a text. However, this omission is carried out by a pause in a sentence in the form of a comma, semicolon, or colon. The following examples are the sentences taken from the short story "Speech Sounds" where the coordinating conjunctions are omitted and commas are used to connect the reader directly to the purpose of the text.

(i) Often there was also paralysis, intellectual impairment, and death (p. 8).

4.1.3 Hypophora

Hypophora refers to the rhetorical strategy of raising a question and then answering that question by the same person who has raised the question. The following sentences from "Speech Sounds" show hypophora in which the narrator is raising questions and answering them by herself.

(i) Would he push things that far? He did not (p. 8).

This method helps in bringing curiosity in the reader which is then answered by the author.

4.2 Types of Modalities

4.2.1 Mode of Analysis

The modal system of Paul Simpson (Suhadi, 2011) is composed of deontic, buolomaic, epistemic, and perception modal systems. Among the four modal systems, two of them, the epistemic modality and deontic modality are pointed out and classified in the short story "Speech Sounds" as shown in the sample analysis. These modal systems are then identified into modal auxiliaries, lexical verbs, lexical-modal auxiliaries, and modal adverbs (Kalinin, Igantenko, 2024). Moreover, after explaining and analyzing the modalities in the short story, shading is recognized which leads to the point of view and manner of the narrative

adopted by the author. The four modality elements, modal operators, modal adjuncts, lexical verbs, and lexical-modal auxiliaries are identified in the short story "Speech Sounds". These four elements are listed along with their occurrences in the short story and the type of modality they fit in is also recognized as can be seen in the table (Annex A).

As can be seen in Table 4.2, the modal markers that indicate epistemic modality and deontic modality are identified, and thus after analyzing the occurrences of markers indicating deontic and epistemic modality it can be seen that epistemic modality has the highest number of occurrences in comparison to deontic modality. The epistemic modal markers have surpassed the occurrences of deontic modality as can be analyzed in the above sample as well where the epistemic lexical verb "wonder" and modal operator "would" have a higher frequency than the deontic which is pointed out by the modal operator "have to" that occurred only once in the sample. The epistemic modality has occurred more in the text than deontic and as epistemic modality refers to judgments of beliefs, certainty, and truth, this research study focuses on certain passages to look at the epistemic modality and how this modality leads to a particular style of the author or shade in the story:

Excerpt 1

*She did not **know** whether this was his fault or hers. She had heard so little coherent human speech for the past three years, that she was **no longer certain** how well she recognized it, **no longer certain** of the degree of her impairment (p. 6).*

The use of the lexical verb "know" clearly shows that the narrator lacks confidence or knowledge in comprehending the situation where a bearded man is shouting and it seems like he is uttering words in his shout but Rye is having difficulty in understanding the situation. Similarly, the phrase "no longer certain" suggests the same condition of the narrator which leads to the negative effect of the

narrative. As described earlier, the epistemic modality points out the uncertain happenings in the story that are exposed through the kind of words a narrator uses, and in this case, the phrases "did not know" and "no longer certain" are words of bewilderment.

Excerpt 2

There seemed to be words in his shout, but Rye could not understand them (p. 6).

Here, again the storyteller is making efforts to comprehend the situation by making efforts to understand the words of a bearded man who is throwing tantrums, and the phrase "seemed to be" adds more to the uncertainty of the narrator about the situation. Thus, the shading in the two excerpts identifies negative shading because of the use of epistemic modal markers that present the lack of confidence or uncertainty of the narrator about a certain event.

Moreover, the kind of narrative that this short story throughout story exhibits is Category B narrative as the story is told in the third person limited point of view where the narrator is participating in the narrative in a way that the narrator's viewpoint is only limited to one person perspective and in case of this short story "Speech Sounds" the character "Rye's" point of view is only third person point of view which means that neither the word "I" nor "We" is used but the words he, she, and they are used in the story. However, at the termination of this short story, the pronouns "I" and "me" are used in a sentence, "I'm Valerie Rye," she said, savoring the words. "It's all right for you to talk to me" (p. 18), which shows the Category A narrative as now the narrator is involved in the event but throughout the story, the narrator is not aware of the situations and conditions of other characters which makes this story placed in Category B narrative.

4.3. Punctuation

There are many punctuation marks in the short story "Speech Sounds" such as commas, apostrophes, question marks, full stops, dashes, hyphens, quotations, and ellipses.

4.3.1 Dash and ellipsis:

The dashes and ellipsis in the short story introduce a new literary device called aposiopesis. The word "aposiopesis", one of the figures of silence, has its origin in the Greek language which means becoming silent. As the title of the story suggests, the dashes and ellipsis are employed to mark the silence and leave the thought incomplete in the short story. The incompleteness of thought or aposiopesis which is an understatement is indicated by ellipsis or dotted lines and dash and this happens when the speech is intentionally interrupted by the speaker for internal reasons due to his emotional state (Vlasova, 2022). The sentence is typically interrupted by the speaker for ethical reasons as the thoughts cannot be expressed openly, and indecisiveness, and awkwardness. It is noted that such speech situations are related to topics of illness, sex, crime, death, and topics that cannot be discussed openly (Vlasova, 2022). Thus, the research study on aposiopesis helps in stylistically analyzing the short story "Speech Sounds" where many pauses by the writer are employed using dashes and ellipses that suggest a pause was taken to describe the narrator's inner thoughts. These inner thoughts of the narrator describe a literary device "internal monologue" as the story is told from a third-person point of view where Rye is the only character engaged in describing the events. In this short story, many ellipses and dashes are used to show the author's style of taking pauses such as:

i. And Rye was alone—with three corpses (p. 15).

In example i the dash is used to show the narrator's sudden break in thought.

ii. She pointed back southwest—back toward home (p. 14).

Sentence ii has a dash that sets off a phrase in the main clause to emphasize it which means that the phrase "back...home" explains the main clause "She...southwest". Similarly, the phrase "back...home" emphasizes Rye's pointing

toward the southwest which explains that she is having a home towards the southwest.

4.3.2 Hyphens: Hyphens are used in the short story "Speech Sounds" multiple times; for instance,

i. Face contorted, he seized Obsidian's *just-holstered revolver* and fired (p. 15).

Hyphens such as U-turn (p.4), forty-five (p.4), dark-tinted (p.4), and left-handed (p.5), in the short story "Speech Sounds" indicate compound words used as an adjective to modify the noun (Oregon State University, 2023). These hyphenated compound words used as an adjective modifies nouns such as dark-tinted windows (p.5), left-handed people (p.5), gas-filled bus (p.5), just-holstered revolver, and boarded-up storefront.

4.3.3 Apostrophes can be used for the omission of letters to show contractions and for showing possession (Davies, n.d.) The apostrophes that are used in this short story either show the contraction of words or ownership of something.

The words, It's, You're, no one's, I'm, and don't in the story indicate apostrophes of omission as these words can be written as it is, you are, no one is, I am, and do not. Similarly,

i. Rye's mind leaped ahead (p. 17).

The words driver's window (p. 5), bearded man's revolver (p. 6), driver's property (p. 6), husband's festering anger (p. 17), or by a stranger's jealous rage (p. 17), and Rye's mind are apostrophes of ownership.

4.3.4 Quotation marks: Quotation marks represent the exact written and spoken words of a certain individual. Sometimes quotation marks also known as speech marks are used to indicate the title of the poem, short story, and article (Panelli, 2014). In the short story "Speech Sounds", quotation marks are used to either give emphasis to a word in a certain context or quote the words of the narrator directly. The other punctuations such as periods, commas, and exclamation marks are set to show the American style of writing quotation marks and

certain rules for quotation marks (Panelli, 2014).

In the sentences,

- i) "As long as no one's around, it's all right." (p. 18).

In this sentence, the American English style of placing periods and commas inside the quotation marks is followed.

- ii. Such "superiority" was frequently punished by beatings, even by death (p. 6).

In this sentence, the quotation marks not only highlight the word "superiority" but also implies an irony that might be interpreted as the world stricken by the pandemic that has left all the people affected, either people are unable to talk or unable to read, in such a disturbing scenario who would be considered as the superior one.

4.3.5 Periods:

Periods or full stops are used to mark an end to a complete thought or sentence. Periods are used at the end of an indirect question, at the end of a command or request, in abbreviations, and in initials to show the end of a letter. In this short story, periods are used to ask a question indirectly like in the sentences:

- i) He touched her while she was strapping her gun on and asked with a complicated series of gestures whether it was loaded (p. 13).
- ii) In the short story, a full stop is also used at the end of an imperative sentence to suggest a command or request as in the sentence of the short story:
- i) She gestured once—a clear indication to the man to stop (p. 7).

4.3.6 Question mark: The question mark or interrogative mark refers to the act of asking questions, being uncertain about something, and seeking information. A question mark is not only applied at the end of an indirect question but is also applied at the closing of a direct question and rhetorical question (Bassett, 2015). In the short story "Speech Sounds", question marks are placed at the end of statements that either indicate the narrator's disbelief or rhetorical questions where answers to the questions are not required, for instance:

- i. What were a few moments of pleasure measured against a lifetime of consequences? (p. 11)

4.3.7 Comma: The punctuation mark, comma, can be used to set off a non-restrictive clause, used after an introductory sentence, in a series of various elements, in separating a group of three digits in a number like 5,000, in separating an adjective that modifies a noun in the sentence, in separating the material in parentheses, closed brackets, and apostrophes within a sentence (Bassett, 2015). The short story "Speech Sounds" is filled with commas and the sentences below show how the commas are used in the short story.

- 1- Used after a long introductory phrase
- i) After a series of obscene gestures that brought him no closer to her, he turned contemptuously and walked away (p. 8).
- 2- Used after a non-restrictive clause
- i) The illness, if it was an illness, had cut even the living off from one another (p. 8).
- 3- Used for separating the material enclosed in brackets
- i) As it swept over the country, people hardly had time to lay blame on the Soviets (though they were falling silent along with the rest of the world), on a new virus, a new pollutant, ... (p. 8).
- 4- Used in a series of elements
- i) As they passed blocks of burned, abandoned buildings, empty lots, and wrecked or stripped cars, he slipped a gold chain over his head and handed it to her (p. 9).
- 5- Used to separate adjectives that modify nouns
- i) The driver got out—a big man, young, neatly bearded with dark, thick hair (p. 4).

Conclusion

This research study has examined "Speech Sounds" by Butler using the theoretical framework of the Simpson modal system to reveal the shade of the story and how the modal adverbs, modal operators, lexical-modal auxiliaries, and modal auxiliaries are employed

in the text to demonstrate the epistemic and deontic modality in the text. The findings show that the epistemic modal markers are higher in occurrence with 151 instances than deontic with just 20 instances. This leads to the conclusion that a large number of occurrences of epistemic modal markers leads to the uncertainty of the narrator about the events and attitudes of the characters in the story (Simpson, 2004). The story begins with the narrator encountering trouble, a state that persists throughout. The chaos from the loss of verbal language and misinterpretation of gestures highlights the narrator's uncertainty about the situations in the story. As the bewildered main character struggles to understand other characters, the story aligns with a Category B narrative, told from a third-person limited perspective.

This study utilizes the Levenston model (Simpson, 1992), which analyzes text graphologically at four levels: punctuation, spelling, typography, and layout. At the punctuation level, the use of commas, periods, apostrophes, question marks, quotation marks, hyphens, ellipses, and dashes is examined through close reading and textual analysis. The analysis includes not only the presence of these punctuation marks but also their stylistic application by the author. Additionally, the study compares the American author's use of punctuation with the British style.

This study examines literary devices by looking at the inclusion and exclusion of specific vocabulary and punctuation markers in the text. New literary devices identified include hypophora, polysyndeton, and asyndeton, discovered through stylistic analysis of punctuation and repeated use of conjunctions "and" and "or." The research is significant for uncovering these devices in the short story "Speech Sounds," which has not been addressed in previous studies. Additionally, it provides a novel quantitative analysis of the modal systems contributing to the story's style. The study concludes that the author's use of

punctuation, such as dashes and ellipses, enhances the narrative, with the absence of verbal language creating tension that is alleviated by the reintroduction of spoken language at the story's end which means that after stylistically analyzing the short story "Speech Sounds", the author has used such a style in which even the dashes and ellipses contribute equally as the written words in the text and silence or the loss of verbal language works as a factor of threat and chaos which is somehow minimized at the end of the story when the element of spoken language is added in the story.

Recommendations

The study paves the way for other such investigations to understand the language of literary works and its connection to the themes and the broader society. It recommends to readers to appreciate and understand stylistic choices in short stories, while to linguists to analyze these linguistic features in their studies.

References:

- Abdullah, S. S., & Abood, A. S. (2016). Hedge as Modality and Point of View in Narratives in Terms of Simpson's Model. *Journal of University of Thi-Qar*, 57-70.
- Abed, Z. A. (2019, May). Stylistic Analysis of the Selected Short Stories by Mary Flannery O'Connor and William Sydney Porter. Amman, Jordan.
- Abood, A. A. (2018). A Study of Modality and Point of View in Some Selected Short Stories. *Journal of Basra Researches for Human Sciences*.
- Al-Abodi, I. K. (2014). A Study of Asyndeton in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. *Journal of the University of Babylon*.
- American Rhetoric: Rhetorical Figures in Sound*. (n.d.). Retrieved from americanrhetoric.com: [https://www.americanrhetoric.com/figures/hypophora.htm#:~:text=Hypophora%3A%20Figure%20of%20reasoning%20in,one's%20own%20question\(s\).&text=%22When%20the%20enemy%20struck%20on,all%20its%20times%20of%20peril.](https://www.americanrhetoric.com/figures/hypophora.htm#:~:text=Hypophora%3A%20Figure%20of%20reasoning%20in,one's%20own%20question(s).&text=%22When%20the%20enemy%20struck%20on,all%20its%20times%20of%20peril.)
- Bassett, M. (2015). *Grammar and Punctuation. Air University Style and Author Guide*, 61-84.

- Benonguil, J. A. (2022, November). Retrieved from ResearchGate.net:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/364958221_Stylistic_Analysis_of_the_Short_Story_Thank_You_Ma'am_by_Langston_Hughe
- Beres, D. (2018, October 9, Tuesday). *bigthink.com*. Retrieved from Big Think:
<https://bigthink.com/the-present/why-we-still-need-fiction/#:~:text=Novels%20open%20us%20to%20the%20nuances%20of%20being%20human.&text=%22Fiction%20is%20the%20lie%20through,to%20increase%20empathy%20and%20understanding>.
- Burke, M. (2014). *The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics*. New York: Routledge.
- Crystal, D. (n.d.). *davidcrystal.com*. Retrieved from David Crystal:
<https://www.davidcrystal.com/Files/BooksAndArticles/-4277.pdf>
- Crystal, D., & Davy, D. (2013). Stylistic Analysis. In D. Crystal, & D. Davy, *Investigating English Style* (pp. 60-91). New York: Routledge.
- Davies, W. (n.d.). *library.unimelb.edu*. Retrieved from University of Melbourne:
https://library.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1924178/Apostrophes.pdf
- Doss, K. (2021, November Wednesday). Retrieved from Study.com:
<https://study.com/academy/lesson/short-stories-definition-characteristics-examples.html>
- Downing, A., & Locke, P. (2006). Expressing Attitudes Towards the Event: Modality. In A. Downing, & P. Locke, *English Grammar: A University Course* (pp. 379-398). Oxon: Routledge.
- Education, M. C. (2021/2022). *studocu.com*. Retrieved from Studocu:
<https://www.studocu.com/ru/document/moskovskiy-gorodskoy-pedagogicheskiy-universitet/linguistic/newspaper-article-a-sample-of-stylistic-analysis/18466823>
- Farnsworth, W. (2011). Using Extra Conjunctions: Polysyndeton. In W. Farnsworth, *Classical English Rhetoric* (pp. 128-129). New Hampshire, US: David R. Godine.
- Gomez-Jimenez, E. (2015). AN INTRODUCTION TO GRAPHOLOGY: DEFINITION, THEORETICAL BACKGROUND. *A Journal of English and American Studies*, 71-85.
- Gomez-Jimenez, E. (2015). Graphology as a Linguistic Level of Analysis: Definition, Theoretical Background and Proposals for Categorization. *Miscellanea*, 71-85.
- Hamza, M. H., & Abbood, H. A. (2020). Polysyndeton in Shakespeare's Othello: A Case of Grammatical Deviation. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity, and Change*, 104-114.
- Hansen, A. J. (2022, September Thursday). *britannica.com*. Retrieved from Encyclopedia Britannica:
<https://www.britannica.com/art/short-story>
- Hassan, S. M., Bano, S., & Tabassum, M. F. (2015). STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF A SHORT STORY "THE HAPPY PRINCE". *Academia*, 1539-1544.
- Iwamoto, N. (1998). Modality and Point of View: A Contrastive Analysis of Japanese Wartime and Peacetime Newspaper Discourse. *Edinburgh Working Papers in Applied Linguistics*, 17-41.
- Jabeen, S. (2012, October). Move Analysis and Stylistic Analysis of Plaintiff Letters of Finance Discovery for Genre-based Teaching of Legal English in Pakistan. Islamabad, Punjab, Pakistan.
- Johnson, R. (2004). *Mantex information design*. Retrieved from mantex.co.uk:
<https://mantex.co.uk/english-language-stylistic-analysis/>
- Kalinin, O. I., & Ignatenko, A. V. (2024). Metaphor power in the context of the author's opinion expression and perception. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 28(1), 166-189. Doi: 10.22363/2687-0088-34791
- Latif, F., Rasheed, M. T., & Ziarat, M. (2020, January 1). *researchgate.net*. Retrieved from ResearchGate:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341869084_A_STYLISTIC_ANALYSIS_OF_THE_NOVEL_FORTY_RULES_OF_LOVE_BY_ELIF_SHAFAK
- Lin, T. (2016, May Friday). *openlab.citytech.cuny.edu*. Retrieved from City Tech OpenLab:
<https://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/elliseng2420sp2016/2016/05/11/after-class-writing-octavia-butlers-speech-sounds/>
- Niazi, N. (2013). A Stylistic Analysis of D.H. Lawrence's 'Sons and Lovers'. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*.
- Oregon State University. (2023). Retrieved from liberalarts.oregonstate.edu:
<https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/soc/speech-students/writing-guide/editing-common-errors/punctuation>

- Panelli, M. (2014). *sjsu.edu*. Retrieved from San Jose State University Writing Centre: <https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/docs/handouts/Quotation%20Marks.pdf>
- Parina, J. C., & Leon, K. D. (2014). A Stylistic Analysis of the Use of Modality to Identify the Point of View in a Short Story. *3L The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 91-100.
- Samina Sarwat, Rabia Batool, & Syed Khuram Shahzad. (2023). Stylistics Analysis of the English Translated Version of Khawaja Ghulam Faris's Selected Kafi. *International "Journal of Academic Research for Humanities"*, 3(4), 39–47B. Retrieved from <https://jar.bwo-researches.com/index.php/jarh/article/view/300>
- Shah, P. (2022, April 6). *Sherlock Institute of Forensic Science*. Retrieved from [sifs.in: https://www.sifs.in/blog-details/history-of-graphology:-graphology-timeline/68](https://www.sifs.in/blog-details/history-of-graphology:-graphology-timeline/68)
- Simpson, P. (2004). *Stylistics: A resource book for students*. New York: Routledge.
- Sorlin, S. (2015). Stylistic Techniques and Ethical Staging in Octavia Butler's Speech Sounds. In M. Rospide, & S. Sorlin, *The Ethics and Poetics of Alterity: New Perspectives on Genre Literature* (pp. 82-93). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Sotirova, V. (2016). *The Bloomsbury Companion to Stylistics*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing plc.
- Suhadi, J. (2011). EPISTEMIC MODALITY AND DEONTIC MODALITY: Two Sides of a Coin. *JULISA*, 156-179.
- Stavans, A., & Zadunaisky-Ehrlich, S. (2023). Text structure as an indicator of the writing development of descriptive text quality. *Journal of Writing Research*, 15(3), 463–496. <https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2024.15.03.02>
- Tariq, D. M. (2018). Style, stylistics and stylistic analysis: A re-evaluation of the modern-day rhetorics of literary discourse. *International Journal of English Research*, 46-50.
- Vlasova, E. V. (2022, May 13). UNDERSTATEMENT-INCOMPLETENESS OR APOSIOPESIS? Odintsovo, Russia.
- Wales, K. (1989). *A Dictionary of Stylistics*. New York: Routledge.
- Xu, Y., Zhuang, J., Blair, R., Kim, A. I., Li, F., Hernández, R. T., & Plonsky, L. (2023). Modeling quality and prestige in applied linguistics journals: A bibliometric and synthetic analysis. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 13(4), 755–779. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssl.t.40215>
- Y.Briones, R. R. (2016). Textual Analysis through Systemic Functional Linguistics. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics (JELTL)*, 109-144.
- Zamna Sarfraz, Ahmad Farid, & Bisma Mahmood. (2023). Investigating the Language Styles: A Stylistic Analysis of Adult's Expressions in Instagram Captions. *International "Journal of Academic Research for Humanities"*, 3(4), 258–269. Retrieved from <https://jar.bwo-researches.com/index.php/jarh/article/view/377>
- Zibin, A., Khalifah, L., & Altakhaineh, A. R. (2024). The role of metaphor in creating polysemy complexes in Jordanian Arabic and American English. *Russian Journal Of Linguistics*, 28(1), 80-101. Doi: 10.22363/2687-0088-34555
- Zibin, A., & Solopova, O. A. (2024). Metaphors across languages, cultures, and discourses: A research agenda. *Russian Journal Of Linguistics*, 28(1), 7-32. Doi: 10.22363/2687-0088-37837

Appendix

Modality elements	Epistemic	Occurrences	Deontic	Occurrences	Total
Modal operators	Must	2	Must	2	97
	Will	0	Have to	4	
	Can	0	Should	4	
	Could	31	Ought to	1	
	May	0	May	0	
	Might	9	Can	0	
	Should	4			
	Ought to	1			
	Would	41			
	Must have	1			
	Shall	0			
Modal adjuncts	Definitely	0	Obligatory	0	27
	Surely	1	Permissible	0	
	Certainly	3	Impermissible	0	
	Obviously	1			
	Perhaps	9			
	Possibly	1			
	Probably	6			
	Likely	1			
	Always	2			
Lexical verbs	Think	4	Have to	4	38
	Guess	0	Need to	0	
	Suppose	0	Allowed to	0	
	Wonder	5	Advised to	0	
	Believe	1	Try to	5	
	Know	13			
	Seemed	6			
Lexical-modal auxiliaries	Likely to be	1			9
	Should be				
	Might be	2			
	May be	3			
		3			
Total		151		20	171

Table 4.2: Modality Elements And Recognizing Modality (Annex A)