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### A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF LEXICAL REPETITION IN THE LITERARY TEXT

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**Abstract:** Lexical repetition is one of the most significant cohesive devices used by writers to create textual unity, highlight key themes, and express emotional or stylistic meanings. This article explores the functional approach to analyzing lexical repetition in literary texts, focusing on its semantic, stylistic, pragmatic, and communicative roles. Drawing on theories of functional linguistics and discourse analysis, the paper examines how repeated lexical items contribute to foregrounding, characterization, thematic development, narrative cohesion, and the construction of literary aesthetics. Examples from modern and classical literature illustrate the diverse functions of repetition. The study concludes by emphasizing the importance of lexical repetition as a multifunctional linguistic tool central to literary interpretation.

**Keywords:** lexical repetition, functional linguistics, literary discourse, textual cohesion, stylistic devices, foregrounding, thematic development, pragmatic function, discourse analysis, narrative structure

#### 1. Introduction

Lexical repetition is a universal feature of human language and a common stylistic device in literary texts. Writers often repeat words intentionally to emphasize ideas, create rhythm, structure the narrative, or convey psychological states. While repetition may appear simple on the surface, its functions in literature are multilayered and deeply meaningful. A functional approach provides a comprehensive framework to reveal how repetition operates not only as a linguistic form but also as a communicative and artistic instrument.

The study of repetition in literary discourse has grown significantly, especially with the rise of functional linguistics, discourse analysis, stylistics, and cognitive linguistics. Functional linguistics, in particular, emphasizes the relationship between linguistic form and communicative function. In this view, repetition is not merely a mechanical recurrence but a purposeful strategy adopted by the author to achieve various textual and aesthetic effects.

This article aims to (1) define lexical repetition as a linguistic and stylistic phenomenon; (2) describe its major functional categories; (3) explore how writers use repetition to achieve literary cohesion, emphasis, theme construction, and characterization; and (4) illustrate these functions with relevant examples. The paper concludes with implications for literary analysis and language teaching.

#### 2. Theoretical Background of Lexical Repetition

##### 2.1 Definition of lexical repetition

Lexical repetition refers to the recurrence of the same lexical item (word or phrase) within a text or discourse. It differs from grammatical repetition (parallel structures) and semantic repetition (synonyms or paraphrase). Lexical repetition may take various forms:

- Exact repetition (the same word repeated without change)

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- Partial repetition (the base word repeated in modified forms)
- Root repetition (words sharing the same root repeated in different derivatives)
- Formulaic repetition (recurrent phrases or expressions)

In literary texts, repetition is seldom accidental; it functions as a cohesive and stylistic resource that guides the reader's interpretation.

### 2.2 Functional linguistics and repetition

Functional linguistics views language as a tool for communication. According to Halliday, every linguistic choice serves a function: ideational, interpersonal, or textual. Lexical repetition can fulfill all three functions:

- Ideational: Clarifying meaning, categorizing experiences, highlighting thematic concepts.
- Interpersonal: Expressing emotion, persuasion, and writer-reader relations.
- Textual: Ensuring cohesion, coherence, and information flow.

Thus, repetition contributes not only to meaning-making but also to the structuring and stylistic shaping of a text.

### 3. Types of Lexical Repetition in Literary Texts

#### 3.1 Simple lexical repetition

This involves repeating a word exactly as it appears. Writers use simple repetition to foreground a concept, intensify emotion, or create rhythm. For example, in Edgar Allan Poe's works, repeated words often convey emotional distress: "Nevermore, nevermore."

#### 3.2 Derivative repetition

Authors may repeat a lexical root in different morphological forms. For example: hope, hopeless, hopeful. This type reinforces semantic fields and deepens symbolic meaning.

#### 3.3 Synonymic and near-synonymic repetition

Repeating closely related words builds semantic density and contributes to descriptive detail. For instance, a writer may use cold, icy, freezing to create atmospheric unity.

#### 3.4 Antonymic repetition

Though seemingly opposite to repetition, alternating antonyms can create thematic tension or contrast. For example: life and death, light and dark.

#### 3.5 Contextual or situational repetition

Certain words gain significance through repeated use in specific narrative situations, contributing to motif-building and thematic resonance.

### 4. Functional Roles of Lexical Repetition

#### 4.1 Cohesive function

One of the primary roles of repetition is to create textual cohesion. Repeating words links sentences, paragraphs, and events, forming a unified narrative. Cohesion guides readers through the thematic and logical flow of the story.

#### 4.2 Emphatic function

Repetition reinforces important ideas and signals their centrality. Writers often repeat key terms to draw the reader's attention to major themes or emotional states. For example, in Shakespeare's plays, repetition often strengthens rhetorical effect and dramatic tension.

#### 4.3 Stylistic and aesthetic function

Repetition contributes to the rhythm and musicality of language, shaping the overall aesthetic impression of a text. Poets frequently employ repetition to produce sound patterns such as alliteration, assonance, and refrain.

#### 4.4 Characterization

Repeated lexical items can reflect a character's thoughts, psychological struggles, or emotional intensity. For instance, when a character repeatedly uses a certain word, it may reveal obsession, fear, or desire.

#### 4.5 Thematic development

Writers often use repetition to underscore central motifs. For example, the repeated use of journey or road can symbolize personal growth or change.

#### 4.6 Pragmatic function

Repetition can signal politeness, irony, sarcasm, or emotional subtlety. It may also mimic speech patterns, making dialogue realistic.

#### 4.7 Structural function

In narratives, repetition can mark transitions, create parallels between scenes, or frame the story. For example, a novel may begin and end with the same sentence, reinforcing cyclical structure.

### 5. Examples of Lexical Repetition in Literary Works

#### 5.1 Example from prose

In Ernest Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea," the word fish is repeated numerous times. This repetition emphasizes the central conflict, the man's struggle, and his respect for nature. It builds coherence and maintains focus on the main plot.

#### 5.2 Example from poetry

In Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night," the phrase "rage, rage against the dying of the light" is repeated as a refrain. The repetition intensifies emotional urgency and conveys a powerful plea.

#### 5.3 Example from drama

In Shakespeare's Macbeth, the repeated words "blood" and "hand" symbolize guilt and moral corruption, becoming thematic anchors throughout the play.

These examples demonstrate the versatility and richness of repetition in shaping literary meaning.

### 6. Methodological Approaches to Analyzing Repetition

#### 6.1 Qualitative analysis

Researchers examine the context, frequency, motivation, and interpretive value of repetition. The focus is on meaning and stylistic effect.

#### 6.2 Quantitative analysis

Using corpus linguistics tools, the frequency and distribution of lexical items can be measured to identify patterns.

#### 6.3 Functional–stylistic analysis

Combines linguistic function with literary interpretation, showing how repetition contributes to artistic and communicative purposes.

### 7. Practical Implications

#### 7.1 For literary studies

Functional analysis of repetition supports more nuanced interpretations of texts. It reveals deeper symbolic layers and authorial strategies.

#### 7.2 For language teaching

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Teaching students how repetition works in literature improves their reading comprehension, stylistic awareness, and writing skills. It also enhances vocabulary acquisition through contextual reinforcement.

#### 7.3 For translation studies

Understanding repetition helps translators preserve stylistic effects and thematic unity in translated texts.

#### 8. Conclusion

Lexical repetition is an essential device that enriches literary texts through cohesion, emphasis, rhythm, thematic depth, and emotional expressiveness. A functional approach reveals that repetition serves multiple communicative and artistic purposes beyond mere recurrence. By analyzing repetition, scholars gain insight into the author's intentions, narrative structure, and stylistic choices. The study of lexical repetition therefore remains a valuable field within linguistics, stylistics, literary criticism, and discourse analysis.

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