



Figurative Language in Layla Al-Atrash's *Nesa'a Ala Al-Mafareq*: A Stylistic Analysis

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze Layla Al-Atrash's *Nesa'a Ala Al-Mafareq* stylistically to address the issue of an identity crisis and self-alienation by shedding light on the Arabic narrative discourse that is used by Al-Atrash in the selected novel. The stylistic analysis focuses on casting lights on how the five protagonists of the selected novel employed their feminist narrative discourse to represent their suffering and how the old cultural and social values affect their lives. To achieve the aim of the study, the researcher relies on Geoffrey Leech's (2006) theory of figurative language to analyze the novel. Accordingly, this study is considered as the first study focusing on analyzing the language used by Al-Atrash linguistically in light of the stylistic analysis of figurative speech such as a simile, metaphor, hyperbole, personification, and metonymy. The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative approaches with (SPSS) program for statistics. The results showed that Al Atrash succeeded in utilizing her feminist narrative discourse linguistically to introduce the catastrophic situation the woman has in the masculine society. Taking into consideration metonyms with the highest rates (189) indicating the problems that the Arab woman encounters without finding a solution. Although hyperbole (126= 23%) refers to the writer's trial to support the readers with the perfect image of a woman's life and why she surrenders to reality and accepts the outdated conventions and traditions.

Keywords: stylistic analysis, Leech's theory, figurative speech, Layla Al_Atrash, *Nesa'a Ala Al-Mafareq*

1. Introduction

A Jordanian-Palestinian novelist, Layla Atrash, has written several significant novels and short stories that have been translated into many languages: English, French, Italian, German, and Hebrew. Some of her literary works have been taught in the Jordanian, and American universities in the Arab countries mainly in UAE and Jordan. Al-Atrash devotes her literary works towards defending humanitarian and social issues. Additionally, she monitors the Arab woman's suffering through her articles, journalistic investigations and TV programs (Shehda, 2020). In most of her works, she highlights woman's position in society. In her novel *La Tushbeh Thatuha* (2014), she tackles the story of an Afghani doctor who met a Palestinian man Munthir. The story of their love relies on introducing two important issues that the Arab world is suffering from the issue of the Taliban and the Palestinian situation.

In the target novel *Nesa'a Ala Al-Mafareq* (2009), courageously, Al-Atrash introduced the stories of seven women whom she met in her traveling and her work as a journalist for 20 years. relying on Arabic narrative discourse, Al-Atrash used a different style of describing the life of seven women from different societies around the world. She depended on narrating different stories with various faces of oppression and persecution. The stories belong to women melting within the old customs and traditions. They were the victims of several types of oppression and abuse.

Furthermore, she depicts the most wonderful images of each country that she has visited naturally, culturally and historically. The seven stories that combine travel literature and short stories carry the following titles: The Black Diamond, Ruba said and the men were silent, the daughter of Heaven is beautiful, Azza is an orphan of Rabat, a first-class passenger, a woman from the Red Zone, a murder honor - no name or address. Each title of these stories symbolizes the meaning of pain. Each title has its symbolic values and social implications (Sahlout, 2017).

1.2 The significance of the study

The current study is considered as the first one that focuses on analyzing the Arabic text stylistically by investigating how the novelist utilized the figurative language to represent the issues of women in the selected novel *Neasa'a Al-Almafareq*. The researcher sheds the light on the language of the novelist and her style in representing the fragmented identities of women around the world.

1.3 Research Questions

In this study, the aims to answer the following questions

- What types of figurative language are used in the novel?
- How does the novelist succeed in introducing the image of a woman stylistically?

2. Literature Review

There is little attention paid to the narrative Arabic discourse, despite its being fruitful literature. Taking into consideration the novel itself, there are no available resources except some articles written by some critics who focus on discussing the themes of the novel from a literary perspective. The Arabic texts have been analyzed as in published titled "Critical Discourse Analysis on Ideology of feminism in Nawal Al- Sadawi's *Muzakkirat Thobibah*. The researchers investigated how Al-SAdawi successfully described the issues of a woman in the Egyptian society by deploying the linguistic features of the Arabic texts in addition to examining the ideological implications. Another study focused on the Arabic text conducted by Hijazi (2019) The Concept of Gender Inequality in Sahar Khalifeh *Muthakirat Imratin Gherru Waqeatin*: A Feminist Discourse Analysis. Hijazi (2019) discussed the concept of gender inequality in Palestinian society by focusing on analyzing the Arabic text linguistically relying on Fairclough's theory, the researcher examined the language of the Palestinian writer from a linguistic perspective focusing on agency, figurative language, ideology. Another study focused on the Arabic text Self in Sahar Khaliefeh "*Muthakirat Imratin Gheiru Waqea'atin*: A Stylistic

Analysis conducted by Hijazi (2021). The researcher addressed the issues of a woman in Palestinian society and how the masculine society delineates their path in life. The researcher depends on the theory of deixis of Fillmore (1997) and Levinson (1983). Al-Masawabi (2020) tackles the figurative language according to Leech's theory in her thesis Tamim Barghouthi's *Figurative Language in Some Selected Patriotic Poems: A Stylistic Approach*. The researcher investigated how the Palestinian poet utilized figurative language in his poem to describe the Palestinian suffering under the occupation. Accordingly, the researcher found there is more need to focus on the Arabic text specifically the language of the female-novelists.

3. Methodology

3.1 Instrument

To analyze the text stylistically, the researcher relies on Leech's theory of figurative speech such as metaphor, metonymy, personification, etc. The researcher intends to investigate how Al-Atrash used some specific types of figurative language in the selected novel *Nesa'a Ala Al-Mafareq* semantically and stylistically. Additionally, she aims to examine how the deployment of figurative language helps in conveying the feeling of each protagonist and introduces a perfect image of herself.

The researcher reads the whole selected novel to investigate the employment of figurative language in the Arabic narrative discourse of the writer to represent each story separately. After that, the researcher analyzes some quotations to support her point of view. Moreover, he intends to focus on some types of figurative languages such as hyperbole, metaphors, symbolism, metonymy, and personification.

3.2 Key terms

3.2.1 Stylistics

It focuses on studying the used word in a written or spoken language. Therefore; stylistics is one of the most significant branches of linguistics that studies the style. Verdonk (2002) defined Style as a distinguished way of language use for some purposes and effects. On the other hand, Kane (2000, p. 18) argued that style exists in the writing itself; it is the actual words, sentences, paragraphs. Leech and Short (Leech & Short, 2007) stated style refers to how a given person uses language in a given context, for a specific purpose. Additionally, Leech and Short (2007) defined simply stylistics as the linguistic study of style and the study of style is to explain something. In the same context, they added that literary stylistics has an implicit and explicit function in which it aims to explain the relationship between language and artistic function.

Accordingly, stylistics is a multidisciplinary field that has intensive with other linguistic fields to analyze both literary and non-literary texts.

3.2.2 Figurative speech

Figurative speech is language relying on the use of words or expressions that go beyond the literal meaning. In everyday language, people utilize figurative language consciously and unconsciously to describe something or to interact with others. Sometimes, they could not convey their message appropriately without using figurative language. Taking the idiomatic expressions "Over the moon" as an example to express overjoy. Figurative language is a departure from what users of the language apprehend as the standard meaning of words, or else the standard order of words to achieve some special meaning or effect (Abrams, 1999).

On other hand, a figure of speech expresses an idea or thought, or image with words that carry meanings beyond their literal ones. Leech (2006) argued that a figure of speech is an ordinary way of the language in use. Figurative language is the aesthetic use of the language of the literary work that essentially supports the understanding of semantics. Furthermore, the aims of using figurative speech are to afford the readers' attention toward the imaginative literary works and it makes the sense of the concrete text. Additionally, it reveals our internal emotions (Harya, 2016). Accordingly, figurative speech can be used in everyday language to support our point of view aesthetically and emotionally. There are various types of figurative speech, but the researcher will depend on some types of Geoffrey Leech's theory such as metaphor, simile, personification, etc.

4. Data analysis

There are various kinds of figurative languages according to the theory of Leech but the researcher will shed light on the following five kinds: metaphor, personification, metonymy, hyperbole, and symbols.

4.1 Metaphor

Metaphor is a kind of figurative meaning that is an implicit comparison in which two irrelevant objects are compared by substituting one with the other. Abraham (1999, p. 97) defined metaphor as a word or an expression that is used literary to denote one kind of thing applied to a distinctly different kind of thing, without asserting comparison. In line with M.H Abraham, Leech (2006) argues that metaphor is the use of a word or phrase that denotes to a kind of idea or object in place of another word or phrase for suggesting a likeness between them, as in the following example *the heart of a lion*.

Al-Atrash succeeds in employing metaphors to represent the identity crisis of each protagonist socially, politically focusing on their relationship with the surrounding environment. These women lost their identities and have the most fragmented identity that affects their beings. In the story of Ruba who did not talk for a long time about the massacre that happened in the Palestinian camp in Lebanon.

وهي تلملم خيوط مجزرة فاجعة فتدافع كلماتها تسابق بشاعة الصور

She was rendered expressive by the barbarianism in the photographs while trying to remember the events of the grievous carnage. (AlAtrash, 2009, p. 59)

فاحتما بخوفهم وصمتهم

They have been hiding within their silence and fears. (AlAtrash, pp. 59-60)

After the catastrophic events, the Palestinians could not have been able to be the witnesses in which they have been forced to be silent for a long time to save the remaining souls. All the incidents cause the identity crisis in which most of them are forced to leave the refuge and could not bear the situation psychologically.

الخوف ربط اللسان

Fear tied the tongue up. (AlAtrash, p. 56)

She resembles fear as something that can be tied up to denote fears from telling the truth about the Sabra and Shatila massacre in Palestinian refuge.

In the story of the woman in Holland, the metaphors were used in a wonderful creative manner to express how her beauty turned into ugliness when she has bought her body to the cities of illusion. Many women have been exploited because life in their countries was unbearable.

يطغى القبح على الجمال في كل شيء

The ugliness covers the beauty in everything. (AlAtrash, p. 126)

إمرأة مقهورة مسلوقة

A ruined oppressed woman. (AlAtrash, p. 126)

But in the story of the Christian woman who was forced to live with her husband and accept the harsh life because she couldn't get divorced religiously and socially. As a wife, she should accept all the bad things to live without complaints. What is the worst is letting her youngest brother kill her to take revenge from her?

ليغسل عارهم

To cleanse their shame and defame. (AlAtrash, p. 15)

Al-Atrash creatively deployed metaphorical words to express the amount of pain and suffer in women's lives around the world. Each story has its significant impact on our life generally, but specifically, the story of Ruba and the Palestinian refugee who has been exposed to the ethnic cleansing.

4.2 Metonym

It is the literal term, for one thing, is applied to another. I am closely associated because of a recurrent relationship in common experience, (Abrams, 1999, p. 98). This figure of speech associates two object things together that they almost have the same close characterization. It is used to add flavor, for example, *these chicken wings*. Leech (2006) stated that metonymy, in literary works, is related to the powerful effect of metaphor. In other words, a metonym is used for emphasizing a statement that attracts the reader to know more about the situation.

The novelist employed this figure of speech innovatively to show the identity crisis due to social and political issues. The female novelist significantly deployed metonymies to refer to how much the social and political events affect the identity and to what extent they cause the identity crisis in each story of the novel.

يؤكد لها والدها كل يوم أن المرأة اساس الخطيئة

Her father asserts for her everyday 'woman is the base of the sin. (AlAtrash, p. 25)

In the story of the Cameroonian girl "the black diamond", the father grew up restricting the movement of women, however, he sent his daughter to study in the USA. Nevertheless, from his perspective, women are the base of all bad deeds, therefore, he declares on many occasions that the woman should be restricted according to the Islamic and values.

دموع قهرها تغطي وجعها

The tears of her oppression cover her face (AlAtrash, p. 37).

The novelist wants to intend to convey a message by referring to the Palestinians living in exile and how death is going around them. the Palestinians have been forced to be silent for a long time. However, Ruba finally talked with painful tears as a reference to the closed silence that she couldn't bear more when she said.

الصمتُ مريب

Dubious silence. (AlAtrash, p. 53)

War causes their identity crisis because they always have been afraid of attacking and killing.

كانت مثلهم تراقب حدثا غير عادي في ايام ليس فيها الارعب الحربي ظلالتها

Like them, she was waiting for an ordinary event on somedays that were full of the fears of war. (AlAtrash, p. 53)

In the story, "Ruba talked and men were silence", the novelist repeatedly referred to the horrors and tragic events that happened to the refuge where lots of people have been slaughtered without mercy by Arab and Zionist soldiers. In contrast the story of Jamila who paid her honor to liberate her country. She was shocked when her nation considered her honorless, which led her to be silent for a long time and accept the harmful social values.

تنفجر البطلة ببكاء هستيري كأنما فكان جرحا دتمبا فتنزف روحها معه

The heroine explodes with hysteric crying, as her wounds were bleeding and her soul was also bleeding with these wounds, (AlAtrash, p. 83)

Ruba did not want to remember the destructive events or the scene of martyrs around her, she kept silent for a long time. Her being speechless for a long time, causes her to suffer and pains.

هو سكون الرهبة والتفكير بقيمة الحياة بعد النجاة من خطر عظيم

The silence of fear and thinking of the values of life after rescue from great danger, (AlAtrash, p. 49)

لم تُكمل البطلة استعادة هول التفاصيل

The protagonist could not continue because of the catastrophic details (AlAtrash, p. 88).

The accidents and catastrophic events have left a great influence on the heroine's personality, which caused her impotence in psychology.

4.3 Personification

The Greek term, *Prosopopeia*, indicates either an inanimate object or an abstract concept that was endowed with life or with human attributes or feelings (Abrams, 1999, p. 99).

Personification is one of the most essential types of figures of speech that transmit the characteristic of a human to another thing. According to Leech (2006) Personification is a figure of speech in which abstraction, animals, ideas, and inanimate objects are having human form, character, traits, or sensibilities, for example, *the flowers are beautiful and they invite the bees to kiss them*. Consequently, personification is the process of conveying the characteristics that normally belong only to humans into animals, objections, or forces of nature. These human characteristics may include verbs of actions that only humans do or some adjectives that are related to human deed and power.

In the selected novel "Nesa'a Al-Almafareq" AlAtrash successfully used this type of figurative speech to indicate the terrible events that women were exposed to. Through the massacre, the women tried to keep their children in safety.

إحتضنت أولادها في رعبٍ وانتظار الموت

She embraced her children in horror waiting for death. (AlAtrash, p. 58)

يعانقون خوفهم وتحديهم فيشعل لظاها

They embrace their fear and challenge, therefore, it lights up intensively. (AlAtrash, p. 35)

In two different stories, Alatrash casts the light on how war influences their identities and refers to what extent it affects their life. Al-Atrash plays on one important point: the emotional case of a mother who can do anything to save her kids and a mother's instinct is to lure away the danger. Furthermore, she insists on living in the refuge and the effect of war on the Palestinian identity politically.

جنون الحرب ومأساة المخيمات

The madness of war and the refuge's catastrophe. (AlAtrash, p. 50)

The personification in the previous examples highlights the displacement of the Palestinians and how they have been oppressed not only by the Zionist but also by the Arabic regime as well. They lost their identity to struggle to dismiss the occupation, but no one had supported them.

4.4 Hyperbole

It is one of the most significant kinds of figurative speech that essentially depends on the concept of exaggeration. Leech (2006) hyperbole is an exaggeration that aims to clarify the truth. In the same context, he stated that hyperbole is a figure of speech focusing on depicting an object and idea that may seem exaggerated.

In a glossary of literary terms, the online Dictionary, hyperbole is the bold overstatement or the extravagant exaggeration of fact or possibility. It may be used either for serious or ironic or comic effect (Abrams, 1999, p. 120).

Therefore, hyperbole is an exaggerated form of statement relying on the use of an exaggeration to convey a more profound meaning, for instance, when someone says "I have lots of things to do", he means he is a busy man. The aim of using the hyperbolic statement is to create a strong impression and emphasis.

In the selected novel *Nesa'a Ala Al-Mafareq*, Al-Atrash extensively used the hyperbolic statement to emphasize the actual oppression and abuse that women opposed to throughout her life. Each story has its own pain. Ruba, the Palestinian refugee, struggled a lot to keep the secret of the slaughter of Sabra and Shatila. She finally exploded because the painful event affects all aspects of her life. She saw people who have been slaughtered and murdered. The massive pain causes her identity crisis. The hyperbolic words are used intentionally as in

صراخ يصم الاذان

Screaming that deafened the ears, (AlAtrash, p. 56)

After the people who were the sole witnesses on the crime, couldn't bear their screaming that was painful and tragically.

وجوه الناس علي المعبر بلا تعابير

The faces of people at the crossing are with no expressions, (AlAtrash, p. 50)

The effects of the massacre are faces without expressions because they refused to remember what happened, she didn't exaggerate since the fact the catastrophe left great effects on them psychologically.

بينما يلح من حولها بنفاذ صبر ان تتجاوز قسوته وعنفه وجروح روحتها وجسدها

While those surrounding her impatiently insist on her exceeding the cruelty, violence in the scene of massacre to wound her spirit and body. (AlAtrash, p. 82)

تلتقط الكاميرا مأساة المخيم ومنظرا لا ينسي كهلا بين الخراب وحده

The camera captures the tragedy of the refuge with an unforgettable sight of an old among the ruins alone. (AlAtrash, p. 61)

فجاء من يبحث عن المذبحة ويحاول ان ينبش تفاصيلها بعد سنوات قليلة ومازال صراع الفرقاء يشتد ويتشعب

Suddenly, who seeks about the massacre and tries to exude its details after some years but the conflict has been continuing among the parties harshly, (AlAtrash, p. 54)

The novelist, Al-Atrash relied on hyperbolic expressions to show the real situation that women reach in the masculine society in peace and war. The exaggerated expressions were used precisely to highlight the real-life and social values that opened the doors to oppress the woman.

4.5 Symbolism

It means that a symbol is what it is and something else that is represented by the words (Leech, 2006) says that a symbol denotes something that means more than what it is. In other words, a symbol could be a word, place, character, or object that means something beyond what it is on the literal level. The term "symbol" is applied only to a word or phrase that signifies an object or event that in its turn signifies something, or has a range of reference, beyond itself. The symbolism has a high impact on presenting each protagonist of the stories that express the mystical ideas, states of mind, and emotions. The title of each woman's story symbolizes the real meaning of pain and suffering. The first one is the *black diamond* (الماسة السوداء) that denotes to the protagonist who was the victim of her father was a religious who restricted her freedom and her choice to live freely. For Cameroonians, she was a real diamond for all people there.

The second story *Ruba said and the men keep silent* (قالت ربي وسكت الرجال) carries one of the most catastrophic events in Palestine history the massacre of Sabra and Shatila where the Zionists and their spies from Lebanon have killed more than 6000 Palestinians with mercifulness. Ruba symbolizes the courageous adult girl who is one of the witnesses who were silent for a long time, however, she could not have been silent more. She told all the truth about the catastrophe.

In the third story, the story titled *the daughter of the sky, Jamila* (ابنة السماء جميلة) denotes the symbol of the Algerian rebellion against the French colonialism and how the harmful events affect her position in society. Additionally, she tackles the event after liberation and how society neglected her because she rapped.

In the fourth and fifth stories, *Aza the daughter of Al-Rebat* (عزة بنت الرباط), and *high-level passenger* (راكبة من الدرجة الاولى) the writer cast the lights on two important issues related to the orphans and olds in the Arab society. She mentions the life of these women and how they are dealt with badly because of their disabilities. On the other hand, she discusses two fundamental social issues in the last two stories, the symbolism was clear in their title *woman from a red Area* (امرأة من المنطقة الحمراء) and *The murdered of honesty* (قتيلة الشرف). Despite each story has a different theme, the writer honestly presented the stories that bugged them. While the first story focused on the issue of a woman who was deceived in the name of love and a better life, the second one escaped from the worst life under pressure and she was forced to accept the worst man because she cannot get divorced in Christianity and social values.

Each story carries its direct and indirect symbols to address the social issues that destroy the structure of the societies around the world and leads to an identity crisis in each one.

5. Result and Conclusion

Layla Al-Atrash, the Palestinian novelist, has worked as a journalist for a long time. Her novel *Nesa'a Ala Al-Mafareq* is one of the most famous feminist novels in Palestinian fiction in which Al Atrash introduced the feminine stories around the world. The stories do not tackle only the social issues but as well, the political struggles that affect women's identity. She creatively deployed figurative language to show how social and political values leave a strong impact on the presence of a woman as an independent identity.

In the story of Ruba and Jamila, Al-Atrash discussed how the occupation left an awful impact on the woman's issue in which both protagonists have been suffered a lot from these impacts. Ruba has lived a year after a year with destructive silence that led her finally to explode to tell the others about the story of one massacre of several massacres committed to cleansing the Palestinian nation. Al-Atrash succeeded in presenting the catastrophic massacre that the Palestinians had faced last centuries with complete reliance on the figurative speech. On the other hand, in the story of Jamila, the Algerian protagonist who defended French colonialism, Jamila sacrificed a lot to have a free country. In contrary to what she dreamt to have; she has gotten the societies that only focus on social values.

Table 1: The Distribution of Figurative language in the novel

Figurative Speech	Frequency	Total	Average
Symbolism	78	551	14
Hyperbole	126	551	23
Metaphors	103	551	19
Personification	55	551	10
Metonyms	189	551	34

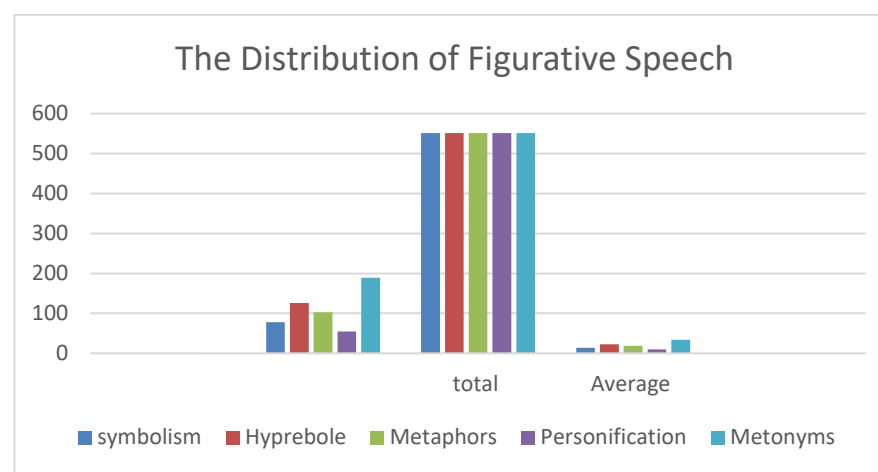


Figure 1: The distribution of the Figurative Language

According to the above table (1), the novelist relies on different types to present the victims of the novel, specifically hyperbole and metonyms with the rates of 23% and 34% respectively. That false social values led her beloved to leave her because Jamila was a prisoner for a long time. Therefore, the novelist successfully aroused that issue depending on the figurative speech especially hyperbole and symbolism. Moving to the other stories that focus on the outdated social values that made woman as a doll. In the story of the black diamond, the novelist creatively introduced the story of some people who believed in some old concepts such as woman is the base of all sins as the father said. With an eloquent style, Al-Atrash introduces the relation between woman and society and how women have been persecuted for ages with full silence to save their families. Finally, the author utilized carefully the figurative speech to introduce how the political issues abuse women and prevent them to practice their rights.

6. Recommendation

Not only do the feminist novels tackle the issues related to women, but also, they shed the light on many other issues. Al-Atrash is well known for her role in supporting women, children, and other humanitarian issues. Therefore, the researcher should work on investigating other topics in the novels written by female writers such as the ideological implications, the issues related to the concept of childhood from a linguistic perspective.

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