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Unveiling Layers of Meaning: A Multimodal Stylistic Exploration of Dr. A. R. Tabassum's *The Last Word*

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the stylistic elements in the short story The Last Word written by Dr. A. R. Tabassum. The study aims to explore the linguistic features of Dr. A. R. Tabassum's short story The Last Word focusing the elements such as repetition, alliteration, and allegory to uncover the impact of these devices in contribution to the overall meaning of the text. Moreover, it also adds the interplay of various semiotic modes like textual, visual and auditory within the text to reveal the complexities of the story's non-linear structure and thematic depth. The text of the story The Last Word was analysed by using Paul Simpson's framework in Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students (2004). This framework facilitates the exploration of multiple semiotic modes, including visual, auditory, and textual elements, allowing for a comprehensive examination of these components that contribute to the narrative's meaning. The qualitative research method involved a close reading of the text to identify key stylistic devices such as repetition, alliteration, and allegory qualitative analysis methods were utilized to interpret their significance in context. This paper reveals the embedded meaning in the text and highlights the interplay of linguistic choices and evocative imagery to enhance the narrative's emotional resonance and reader engagement. The findings indicate that a multimodal approach not only enriches the understanding of the story but also reveals the complexities of its non-linear structure and thematic depth. Ultimately, this analysis underscores the significance of integrating multimodal stylistics in literary studies, advocating for a broader comprehension of narratives that engage and affect readers through various semiotic modes.

Introduction

Stylistic analysis has long provided a framework for exploring the linguistic and semiotic features of literary texts, helping to uncover the intricate mechanisms through which language constructs meaning and evokes emotional responses. Recently, multimodal approaches have gained prominence in narrative studies, focusing on different semiotic modes, such as visual, auditory, and textual elements, interact within a narrative. This study applies such an approach to *The Last Word*, a short story by Dr. A. R. Tabassum. The narrative is characterized by its use of non-linear storytelling, allegory, repetition, and alliteration, which together create a layered and emotionally resonant narrative.

Drawing on Paul Simpson's framework in *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students* (2004), this study aims to examine these linguistic and semiotic elements function within the text. Simpson's approach allows for an exploration of both traditional stylistic devices and multimodal elements, facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of the story's thematic depth. Furthermore, the study takes inspiration from other multimodal analyses, such as Nørgaard's (2018) exploration of stylistic features extend beyond words into visual and auditory modes, to investigate these aspects interact in *The Last Word* to enhance its complexity.

The primary aim of this research is to explore the stylistic and semiotic features in Dr. A. R. Tabassum's short story *The Last Word* to uncover its contribution to the overall meaning and emotional depth of the narrative. The specific objectives include the identification and analysis of the key stylistic devices, such as repetition, alliteration and allegory employed by Dr. A. R Tabassum in the narrative. This study also reveals the complexities of the story's non-linear structure and thematic depth by examining the interplay of textual, visual and auditory elements of the Dr. A. R Tabassum in the narrative The Last Word.

Research Questions

To achieve these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. Which stylistic devices are most prominently employed by Dr. A. R. Tabassum in *The Last Word*, to contribute to the overall emotional impact of the narrative?
2. How does the interplay of textual, visual, and auditory elements in *The Last Word* contribute to the complexity of the story's non-linear structure and enhance its thematic depth?

This study contributes to the field of multimodal stylistics, a burgeoning area within literary studies. While previous research has examined stylistic features in isolation, this study integrates multimodal perspectives, aligning with Nørgaard's (2017) and Pillière's (2014) work on how multimodality enriches narrative understanding. By applying these concepts to *The Last Word*, the study provides fresh insights into the emotional resonance and thematic depth of the story. Additionally, it advocates for a more comprehensive approach to stylistic analysis, one that accounts for multiple semiotic modes and their interaction within a narrative. This approach broadens the scope of stylistic analysis, offering a richer comprehension of narratives that engage readers through more than just linguistic choices.

Literature Review

The field of stylistic analysis of literary texts has made considerable progress, with early studies concentrating on integrating various linguistic elements, while more contemporary work includes multimodal analysis. The application of various frameworks allows for the analysis of more

complex works, such as The Last Word by Dr. A. R. Tabassum, which combines traditional and multimodal elements. Within the discipline of stylistics, the analysis of the linguistic features that aid meaning construction in a piece of literature, is of particular importance. In the development of the field, the work of Short and Semino (2008) pioneered the understanding of how various linguistic elements, including metaphors, repetition, and alliteration, impacted the structure of a narrative and shaped emotional responses. Within The Last Word, repetition and alliteration play a significant role as stylistic features, and the present study is concerned with these elements within the text.

In his widely cited work Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students, Simpson (2004) establishes a framework that has become a staple for contemporary stylistic analysis. By combining micro-analytic linguistic features and macro-analytic narrative components, Simpson has contributed to discourse on the stylistic interplay in The Last Word. Simpson also shares scholarly concerns with Carter (2010), who integrated pedagogical approaches for teaching stylistic analysis with the concepts of close reading and linguistic analysis. In the vein of pedagogical scholarship, other important work includes Khan et al. (2015), who undertook a stylistic analysis of The Last Word by Dr. A. R. Tabassum and discussed the linguistic features of repetition and allegory. By illustrating the emotional and thematic depth of the text, they provided a point of departure for this study. While useful, their analysis was largely restricted to linguistic features, inviting the opportunity to explore the work using a multimodal approach. Gebauer (1987) constitutes a critical voice in stylsitics, and his work on critical appraisals of stylistic analysis models serves to highlight the shifts in approaches to stylistic analysis over time. For this study, he justifies the use of multimodal stylistics by illustrating the interrelationship of linguistic features and narrative structure.

The new possibilities for literary analysis resulting from the expansion of stylistic analysis to include multimodality are exciting. A pioneer in multimodal stylistics, Nørgaard (2017) demonstrated the interplay of diverse semiotic dimensions—textual, visual, and auditory— in the meaning construction of a literary work. For texts like The Last Word, which uses linguistic and non-linguistic elements for meaning construction, this focus on multimodal analysis is invaluable. Pillière (2014), drawing on Nørgaard (2018), advanced the field by describing how stylistic analysis could move beyond the constraints of traditional linguistics towards a multimodal approach. Her work laid the groundwork for this study by integrating non-verbal elements, and in particular, the study of visual and auditory elements that The Last Word combines with linguistic elements. McIntyre (2008) was another important contributor to the field to add multimodal analysis in the stylistics of drama. The principles of his analysis that centered on performance the interplay of visual and auditory aspects and the text can be applied to narrative fiction as well. His work, in this sense, aligns with the current study that investigates non-linguistic modalities of The Last Word to enhance its themes and structure.

Nørgaard et al. (2010) Key Terms in Stylistics offers an essential guide not only for terminology, but also the theoretical foundations of multimodal stylistics. This text is crucial for comprehension of the different semiotic modes at play in a narrative, and it also serves as a basis for the analysis of interworking semiotic modes in The Last Word.

As the field of stylistic analysis expands, researchers have started to incorporate cognitive and computational approaches to the study of texts. Qureshi et al. (2021) emphasized computational stylistic analysis and the use of quantitative methods to identify patterns within literary texts. Their study concentrated on Oscar Wilde, but the arguments for the use of computational analysis could be used to study the patterns of repetitive stylistic elements in The Last Word. In a similar vein, Ashtari-Majlan et al. (2023) investigated deep learning and computer vision for medical uses, but

their methods show the tendency in the digital humanities to meld computational approaches with literary studies. This cross-disciplinary work on computational stylistic analysis opens new avenues for the study of stylistics, especially the possible use of computational techniques alongside multimodal approaches in literary texts. Craig (2004) focused on the interplay of stylistic analysis and authorship studies within the digital humanities and stressed the role of stylistic features in pinpointing a narrator's voice and structuring a narrative, which relates to this study's exploration of how Dr. A. R. Tabassum's stylistic patterns shape the themes of The Last Word.

The intersection of gender, culture, and stylistics has garnered attention in various fields of study. Husain (1934) has examined Hali's influence on Urdu literature, and this has cultural implications for understanding some of the stylistic intricacies in Dr. A. R. Tabassum's work, especially the allegorical dimensions that offer critiques on the social or cultural levels. A comparative framework for the use of stylistic devices in building narrative tension and thematic construction in The Great Gatsby was provided by Qweider and Kamel (2021). Their work can be related to the use of repetition and other stylistic devices in The Last Word, which perform the same functions in the construction of the book's non-linear narrative. Their study on narrative strategies is related to the concerns of this study in the use of stylism in The Last Word to enhance emotional and thematic expression.

The studies of stylistics cover a range of topics from classical linguistic studies through multimodal analyses to the use of computational tools for analyses of style, allowing for a thorough study of The Last Word. Drawing from the works of Nørgaard (2018), Pillière (2014), Simpson (2004), and others, this study aims to reveal the intricacies of Dr. A. R. Tabassum's narrative by examining the interplay of the textual, visual, and aural components of the work to construct a complex and deeply felt story. Applying both traditional and multimodal stylistic methods provides a more comprehensive understanding of the engagement of the text, which offers wide possibilities for study across several semiotic dimensions.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to examine the stylistic elements in Dr. A. R. Tabassum's short story *The Last Word*, with a focus on multimodal stylistics. The methodology involves a detailed and systematic analysis of linguistic features such as repetition, alliteration, and allegory, as well as the interplay of textual, visual, and auditory modes within the narrative. By utilizing Paul Simpson's (2004) stylistic framework, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding these stylistic devices contribute to the story's overall meaning and emotional impact. A qualitative research design was chosen for this study due to its emphasis on interpretation and in-depth analysis of literary texts. This approach facilitates the examination of not only linguistic features but also multimodal elements, which are essential for understanding the complex structure of *The Last Word*. The analysis involves a combination of traditional stylistic methods and multimodal analysis, allowing for a holistic exploration of the narrative's meaning.

Framework for Analysis

Paul Simpson's (2004) framework for stylistics, as outlined in *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*, serves as the foundation for the textual analysis. Simpson's model offers tools for examining linguistic features such as syntax, semantics, phonology, and pragmatics, all of which are pertinent to understanding the stylistic choices in *The Last Word*. His framework also allows for the consideration of various semiotic modes textual, visual, and auditory interact to enhance the narrative's thematic complexity.

Category	Description	Key Features
Phonology	The study of sound patterns in language and their contribution to meaning.	Alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme, rhythm, intonation.
Lexis	The vocabulary choices within a text.	Word choice, register, collocations, synonyms, antonyms, word frequency.
Syntax	The structure and arrangement of sentences and phrases.	Sentence length, sentence types (declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory), word order, and syntactic parallelism.
Semantics	The meaning of words, phrases, and sentences within the text.	Literal meaning, figurative language (metaphor, simile, metonymy), connotations, denotations, ambiguity.
Pragmatics	The relationship between language and its context of use, including how meaning is constructed in different social and cultural contexts.	Speech acts (direct/indirect), politeness strategies, implicature, deixis, conversational maxims, presupposition.
Graphology	The visual aspects of written language, including the layout of the text and the use of punctuation or typography.	Capitalization, bold/italics, punctuation, font style, layout, paragraph structure, line breaks.
Discourse	The structure of texts at a macro level, focusing on coherence and cohesion in language beyond the sentence.	Discourse markers, thematic progression, cohesion (reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions), foregrounding, framing.
Stylistic Devices	Specific literary or linguistic techniques used to create particular effects.	Repetition, alliteration, assonance, parallelism, irony, allegory, personification, hyperbole, understatement, rhetorical devices.
Modality	The expression of attitudes, beliefs, and degrees of certainty or uncertainty by speakers and writers.	Modals (can, will, may, must), epistemic modality (certainty, possibility), deontic modality (obligation, necessity).
Narrative Perspective	The viewpoint from which the story is told, including how the narrator's voice and point of view influence the narrative.	First-person, third-person omniscient/limited, free indirect discourse, stream of consciousness.
Intertextuality	The relationship between a	Quotation, allusion, parody,

	text and other texts, including references, allusions, and influences from other works or genres.	pastiche, textual borrowing, genre conventions.
Multimodal Analysis	The integration of multiple semiotic modes (e.g., visual, auditory) into the text, beyond traditional linguistic analysis.	Visual imagery, auditory effects, spatial arrangement, embodied actions, gestures, multimedia elements (graphics, sounds, videos).

The data for this study is the text of *The Last Word* by Dr. A. R. Tabassum. The story was read closely multiple times to identify key stylistic devices, including repetition, alliteration, and allegory. Additionally, attention was given to the visual and auditory dimensions implied within the text, such as imagery, symbolic representations, and rhythm in dialogue, which contribute to the multimodal aspects of the narrative.

The qualitative methodology employed in this study, grounded in Paul Simpson's stylistic framework and supported by multimodal analysis, offers a comprehensive approach to understanding the complex interplay of linguistic, visual, and auditory elements in *The Last Word*. This methodological approach ensures that the analysis captures both the micro-level stylistic features and the macro-level thematic and structural complexities of the narrative.

Data Analysis and Discussion

To address the research question "Which stylistic devices are most prominently employed by Dr. A. R. Tabassum in The Last Word, and its contribution to the overall meaning and emotional impact of the narrative?" Paul Simpson's (2004) framework for stylistics, was applied as outlined in Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students. The analysis examined various stylistic features, including phonology, lexis, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and discourse structure, focusing on how these elements shape the story's emotional depth and narrative complexity.

Table 1: presents the stylistic devices most prominently employed by Dr. A. R. Tabassum in *The Last Word*, and how do they contribute to the overall meaning and emotional impact of the narrative.

Stylistic Feature	Device Employed	Example from the Text	Effect on Narrative	Emotional Impact
Phonology	Repetition	"I said no. No. No. No." – Repeated use of "no" in dialogue.	Creates rhythm and emphasizes emotional resistance and inner turmoil.	Heightens emotional intensity and urgency, reflecting the character's defiance and psychological conflict.
Lexis	Alliteration and Symbolism	"The final flicker of flame faded..." – Alliteration of "f" sounds.	The use of alliteration enhances the flow and creates a vivid image of closure.	Adds lyrical quality; reinforces emotional themes of fading life or closure, signaling the end.
Syntax	Sentence Structure	"He stood there, breathless. Time	Short sentences during moments	Creates a dynamic rhythm that mirrors

	Variation	stopped." (Short sentence); "His mind wandered through the endless corridors of his past." (Long sentence)	of tension; longer sentences for reflective thoughts.	the characters' psychological and emotional states, increasing reader immersion.
Semantics	Allegory	The story title itself, "The Last Word," is both literal (final statement) and symbolic (the ultimate resolution or power).	Operates on both literal and figurative levels, symbolizing broader themes such as power, finality, and resistance.	Deepens intellectual and emotional engagement, adding layers of meaning about autonomy and fate.
Pragmatics	Indirect Speech and Implicature	"I guess you have nothing left to say." – Implies resignation without directly expressing defeat.	Dialogue often conveys indirect meanings, highlighting cultural nuances and unspoken tensions.	Builds tension and adds depth to character interactions, enhancing the reader's understanding of power dynamics.
Discourse Structure	Non-linear Narrative	The narrative jumps between different moments, such as past reflections and present events, without clear chronological order.	Fragmented structure reflects thematic complexity and mirrors the characters' internal conflicts.	Enhances the reader's active engagement and mirrors emotional uncertainty, making the story's thematic depth more profound.
Multimodal Elements	Visual and Auditory Imagery	Descriptions like "The room was silent, yet the echo of her words hung heavy in the air..."	The rich visual and auditory imagery creates vivid sensory impressions, amplifying emotional tension.	Enhances immersion and emotional resonance, drawing the reader deeper into the emotional landscape of the narrative.

The analysis of Dr. A. R. Tabassum's *The Last Word* using Paul Simpson's (2004) stylistic framework reveals that the short story employs various stylistic devices that significantly enhance its narrative depth and emotional resonance. These devices, including repetition, alliteration, allegory, sentence structure variation, and non-linear discourse, not only serve aesthetic purposes but also contribute to the construction of meaning and the overall emotional impact on the reader.

Repetition and Phonology

One of the most prominent stylistic devices in *The Last Word* is repetition, particularly in the dialogue. Repeated phrases such as *"No. No. No."* are used to convey emotional intensity, signaling resistance and internal turmoil. Repetition, as noted by Simpson (2004), is a powerful tool for emphasizing emotions and drawing attention to key thematic elements. The rhythmic effect of repeated words or phrases resonates with the reader, building a sense of urgency and highlighting critical moments in the narrative.

Repetition in *The Last Word* serves a dual purpose: it mirrors the psychological state of the characters and enhances the emotional stakes of the story. Similar findings can be observed in works such as Khan et al. (2015), where the use of repetition in a stylistic analysis was noted to create emotional depth by reinforcing characters' inner conflicts and anxieties. In this way, repetition contributes to both meaning-making and reader engagement, as it emphasizes the struggle for power and autonomy central to the story's theme.

Lexis: Alliteration and Symbolism

Another key feature in the text is alliteration and the use of symbolism. For instance, the phrase *"The final flicker of flame faded..."* employs alliteration to create a flowing, poetic quality. This technique underscores the theme of finality and closure in the narrative. According to Qureshi **et al.** (2021), alliteration helps not only with creating a lyrical effect but also in directing the reader's attention to specific imagery, which enhances the thematic experience of the text.

Moreover, Dr. Tabassum uses symbolism extensively throughout the story. The title *The Last Word* itself operates on both a literal and figurative level, symbolizing both the final act in a dialogue and a broader metaphor for ultimate power or resolution. As Nørgaard (2018) suggests, multimodal stylistics and the careful use of lexis allow for deeper interpretation of texts, where words transcend their immediate meaning and invite readers to explore layered symbols that contribute to the overall meaning. In *The Last Word*, the use of symbolism deepens the thematic structure, evoking concepts of power, agency, and resistance.

Syntax: Sentence Structure and Emotional Impact

The variation in sentence structure is another device that Dr. Tabassum uses to great effect. Short, fragmented sentences, such as *"He stood there, breathless. Time stopped."* appear during tense moments, mirroring the characters' emotional state and creating an urgent, intense atmosphere. In contrast, longer sentences, like *"His mind wandered through the endless corridors of his past,"* are used in reflective moments, allowing the narrative to slow down and explore themes in greater depth.

This contrast in sentence length reflects what Carter **(**2010**)** describes as a stylistic tool for managing reader perception and engagement. By using short sentences during moments of tension and longer sentences during reflection, the author can modulate the emotional rhythm of the story. The varying sentence structures align with the psychological experiences of the characters, guiding the reader through moments of high emotion and introspection. Similar observations are made in Gebauer (1987)**,** where the strategic use of syntactical variation was found to increase narrative complexity and emotional richness.

Allegory and Semantics

Dr. Tabassum employs allegory to add a layer of depth to *The Last Word*. On the surface, the story narrates the interaction between individuals, but it also serves as a broader reflection on power dynamics, control, and the human desire for autonomy. The title alone, *The Last Word*, carries an

allegorical meaning—implying not just the final say in a conversation, but also symbolizing the ultimate resolution in life or fate.

The use of allegory is a common stylistic device in narratives that explore complex themes, as noted by Pillière (2014) in his study on multimodal perspective. Allegory allows authors to present themes that resonate on both individual and universal levels, adding a rich interpretative dimension to the text. In *The Last Word*, this device is used to explore broader societal and philosophical questions, engaging readers in a reflection on power and personal agency.

Non-linear Discourse Structure

The non-linear structure of the narrative further enhances its complexity. By shifting between different time periods and perspectives, the story creates a sense of fragmentation that mirrors the characters' emotional and psychological conflicts. This technique aligns with McIntyre (2008), who highlights that non-linear narrative structures challenge the reader to actively engage in piecing together the storyline, making the reading experience more interactive and immersive.

The fragmented discourse structure in *The Last Word* not only reflects the characters' inner disarray but also adds to the thematic depth of the story, as it represents the fluid nature of memory, time, and resolution. Such a narrative technique resonates with Gibbons (2015)**,** who underscores the importance of narrative fragmentation in enriching the thematic concerns of contemporary literature.

Multimodal Elements: Visual and Auditory Imagery

The Last Word is primarily a textual narrative, Dr. Tabassum incorporates vivid visual and auditory imagery to engage the reader's senses. Descriptions such as *"The room was silent, yet the echo of her words hung heavy in the air..."* evoke a sensory experience that transcends the written word. According to Nørgaard (2017)**,** multimodal elements, even in textual works, allow for a richer interpretive experience by engaging multiple sensory modes—visual, auditory, and cognitive.

The use of such multimodal elements in *The Last Word* enhances the emotional resonance of the story, making the tension and atmosphere more palpable for the reader. The sensory detail provided through these images helps to evoke an emotional response, making the characters' experiences more immersive.

The findings from this analysis highlight the effectiveness of multimodal stylistic devices in enriching both the meaning and emotional impact of Dr. A. R. Tabassum's *The Last Word*. The use of repetition, alliteration, allegory, sentence variation, non-linear narrative, and multimodal imagery work together to create a complex and emotionally resonant story. This multimodal stylistic approach, as emphasized by Simpson (2004) and Nørgaard (2018), not only provides a richer understanding of narrative techniques but also underscores the significance of integrating multiple semiotic modes in literary analysis.

Paul Simpson's framework, reveals that *The Last Word* is a deeply layered narrative where stylistic devices serve to enhance both its thematic depth and emotional resonance. The study suggests that integrating multimodal stylistics in literary studies offers a more comprehensive understanding of narratives, especially those with non-linear structures and allegorical depth, advocating for a broader perspective in stylistic and narrative analysis.

Table 2: presents the interplay of textual, visual, and auditory elements in *The Last Word* contribute to the complexity of the story's non-linear structure and enhance its thematic depth.

Stylistic Element	Example(s) from The Last Word	Function	Contribution to Narrative Complexity and Thematic Depth
Textual Elements	- *"No. No. No."* (repetition) - *"The final flicker of flame faded..."* (alliteration) - *"He stood there, breathless. Time stopped."* (sentence variation)	Emphasizes resistance and finality through repetition; alliteration evokes imagery of closure; sentence variation reflects emotional states	Reinforces emotional tone, establishes non-linear structure by highlighting pivotal, disjointed moments
Visual Elements	- *"The room was silent, yet the echo of her words hung heavy in the air..."* - Title: *The Last Word* as symbol of finality and control	Uses imagery and symbolism to add emotional weight to abstract themes like control	Enhances thematic depth, as symbols and recurring images give coherence to the fragmented narrative structure
Auditory Elements	- *"The echo of her words..."* (sound imagery) - *"No. No. No."* (rhythmic repetition)	Sound imagery reinforces persistence of unresolved conflicts; rhythmic repetition of phrases emphasizes key emotional moments	Heightens emotional resonance and mirrors the story's cyclical nature, contributing to the non-linear and layered narrative

The findings reveal that the stylistic elements in *The Last Word*, including textual, visual, and auditory features, combine to create a narrative rich in emotional depth, thematic complexity, and structural intricacy. By leveraging Paul Simpson's (2004) framework, which integrates multimodal elements in stylistic analysis, these elements contribute to the story's impact on readers. The discussion below explores each element and aligns them with relevant research to underscore their significance within the text.

Textual Elements: Repetition, Alliteration, and Sentence Variation

Textual elements like repetition**,** alliteration**,** and syntax variations play a foundational role in establishing both the emotional tone and the non-linear structure of *The Last Word*. Repetition, as seen in phrases like *"No. No. No."*, and alliteration in phrases like *"The final flicker of flame faded…"* amplify the themes of finality, control, and resistance. By repeating words and sounds, the author not only heightens the emotional tension but also slows down the reading pace, which allows readers to reflect on the characters' motivations and struggles. This approach aligns with Carter's (2010) assertion that stylistic choices can serve as "cognitive cues," guiding readers through the emotions of a narrative and helping them grasp the underlying themes of closure and

autonomy variation, particularly in the alternation between short, abrupt phrases and longer, flowing sentences, adds to the complexity of the narrative by mirroring the fluctuating states of the characters' emotions and thoughts. Such syntactic variety reflects the characters' psychological tension and, as Nørgaard (2017) points out, provides a "linguistic rhythm" that mimics the internal conflicts of the story's central figures. This ton tributes to the narrative's non-linear structure by highlighting emotional peaks and valleys, which draw readers into the fragmented progression of events and create an engaging reading experience.

Visual Elements: Imagery and Symbolism

Visual imagery in *The Last Word*, particularly phrases like *"The room was silent, yet the echo of her words hung heavy in the air,"* evokes vivid mental images that add depth to the narrative's abstract themes. This technique makes intangible feelings, like unresolved conflict or lingering memories, almost tangible, helping readers visualize the story's emotional weight. This aligns with Nørgaard's (2018) work on multimodal stylistics, which emphasizes that visual language creates mental representations that allow readers to emotionally connect with complex thematic elements.

Additionally, symbolism inherent in the title *The Last Word* serves as both a visual and conceptual anchor for the theme of finality. As Pillière (2014) suggests, symbols in a multimodal narrative can carry "layered meanings," adding complexity to the text by prompting readers to consider deeper societal or psychological implications. In this case, the title is the theme of control, visualising the power struggles embedded within the story, thereby adding to the narrative's thematic richness.

Auditory Elements: Sound Imagery and Rhythmic Repetition

Auditory imagery in *The Last Word*, particularly the echo of spoken words and rhythmic repetition of phrases, reinforces the story's emotional and thematic dimensions. The sound of lingering words, described as *"The echo of her words,"* brings an auditory layer to the narrative that reminds readers of the persistence of unresolved issues. This aligns with Simpson's (2004) phonological analysis framework, where sound devices amplify emotional impact by creating an "auditory rhythm" that resonates with the reader long after reading the text.

The rhythmic repetition in phrases like *"No. No. No."* creates an auditory experience that echoes the characters' internal resistance and conflict. Repetition here serves both as a textual and auditory tool, reflecting the cyclical, unresolved tension between characters, and amplifying the emotional resonance of these moments. Carter (2010) highlights the significance of auditory elements in stylistics, noting that the rhythmic repetition of sounds creates an immersive experience that draws readers closer to the emotional center of the narrative.

Contribution to Non-linear and Thematic Depth

The non-linear structure of *The Last Word* emerges from the fragmented sequence of events, combined with shifts in tone and syntax that reflect the characters' fluctuating psychological states. This structure challenges readers to actively interpret the fragmented timeline, as they piece together the narrative by tracing recurring themes and stylistic patterns. McIntyre (2008) posits that such non-linear storytelling often encourages readers to engage more deeply, as they reconstruct the chronology while exploring thematic nuances.

Overall, the interplay of textual, visual-auditory elements reinforces the thematic complexity of *The Last Word* by engaging readers on multiple sensory levels, thereby enhancing the story's emotional resonance and depth. According to Gibbons (2015), integrating multimodal elements in literary texts allows readers to experience the narrative through a variety of sensory and cognitive channels, adding layers of meaning that extend beyond the literal content. The stylistic elements in

The Last Word create a trimodal experience that immerses readers in the emotional, thematic, and structural dimensions of the story, demonstrating the power of a multimodal stylistic approach in literary analysis.

This analysis underscores how a multimodal approach, as outlined in Simpson's stylistic framework, reveals the layered complexities of *The Last Word*, advocating for an approach that integrates textual, visual, and auditory analysis to understand the full impact of literary narratives.

Conclusion

This study's analysis of Dr. A. R. Tabassum's *The Last Word* reveals stylistic devices such as repetition, alliteration, sentence variation, and symbolic imagery contribute profoundly to both the emotional depth and thematic complexity of the narrative. Through a multimodal approach, the study shows that these devices not only create evocative imagery but also shape readers' understanding of control, finality, and conflict in the story. The textual elements—particularly repetition and sentence variation—serve as structural markers, drawing readers into pivotal emotional moments, while visual elements like symbolism intensify thematic resonance by anchoring abstract themes in concrete imagery. This aligns with Carter's (2010) and Nørgaard's (2017) observations on how stylistic choices reinforce narrative meaning and emotional tone.

The interplay of textual, visual, and auditory elements further enhances the story's non-linear structure and thematic depth. Auditory imagery, such as the recurring echo of words, adds a rhythmic layer to the story, accentuating the lingering impact of unresolved conflicts and reinforcing the cyclical nature of the characters' emotional states. These elements work together to establish a fragmented, non-linear structure that compels readers to actively piece together the narrative, an experience emphasized in McIntyre's (2008) findings on the cognitive engagement prompted by non-linear storytelling.

In conclusion, *The Last Word* exemplifies how multimodal stylistic elements create a layered reading experience, where meaning is conveyed through an interwoven fabric of linguistic and sensory cues. The study demonstrates that a multimodal approach, as per Simpson's framework, enriches the comprehension of narrative structures and themes, advocating for a broader, more integrated approach to literary analysis that encompasses the sensory and cognitive dimensions of reader engagement.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Future studies on *The Last Word* and similar narratives could benefit from expanding the analysis to include digital and visual adaptations, such as animated or graphic interpretations, to explore multimodal storytelling's evolving potential. Comparative studies examining stylistic elements across different cultural or linguistic contexts may also deepen understanding of universal versus unique stylistic practices. Additionally, incorporating reader-response theory could offer insights into different audience interpretation and emotionally engage with stylistic devices in non-linear narratives. Overall, interdisciplinary approaches blending stylistics with cognitive psychology or media studies can further illuminate the role of multimodal elements in reader comprehension and impact.

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