Reading Pace Acceleration in The Fifth Corpse: A Stylistic Study

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تسارع وتيرة القراءة في رواية الجثة الخامسة: دراسة اسلوبية

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Abstract

This study examines a novel extract from *The Fifth Corpse* by Hussein Al-Sayyed from a stylistic perspective. The purpose of this analysis is to discern the attributes of the extracts that prompt pace acceleration by the audience. When reading a novel, readers typically maintain a standard reading pace. However, at specific junctures, they tend to accelerate their reading pace. The study is designed to examine the textual elements within the selected extract that facilitate rapid reading in the light of Simpson's (2014) model. The model is adapted to be restricted to only one of Halliday's matafunctions (2004); namely the textual metasfunction. The Analysis revealed that most of the structures of the extract encourage reading pace acceleration. These employ simple clauses and syndetically or asyndetically coordinated clauses.

Key words: stylistic, reading pace acceleration, textual elements, simple clauses, syndetically coordinated clauses.
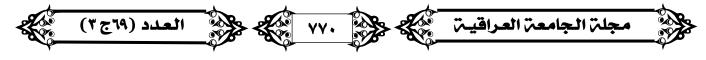
المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة اقتباساً من رواية الجثة الخامسة لحسين السيد من منظور أسلوبي. الغرض من هذا التحليل هو التمييز بين الخصائص التي تدفع القُرّاء إلى زيادة سرعة وتيرة القراءة. عند قراءة روايةٍ ما، يحافظ القُرّاء عادة على وتيرة قراءة قياسية. ومع ذلك، في نقاطٍ محددة، يميلون إلى تسريع وتيرة قراءتهم. تم تصميم الدراسة لتقصّي العناصر النصيّة داخل النص المُختار التي تُسهّل قراءته بسرعة في ضوء انموذج سمبسون (٢٠١٤). يتم تكييف الانموذج ليقتصر على إحدى وظائف هاليدي (٢٠٠٤)، وهي الوظيفة النصيّة. أظهر التحليل أن معظم تراكيب جُمَل الاقتباس تشجع على تسارع وتيرة القراءة. إذ تستخدم تلك التراكيب جُمَل بسيطة بالاضافة الى جُمل مركبة مع او من دون ان تكون ادوات الربط ظاهرة.الكلمات المفتاحية:اسلوبي, تسارع وتيرة القراءة,عناصر نصيّة, جُمل بسيطة, جُمل مترابطة بأدوات ربط.

1. Introduction

Simpson (2014) has developed his research framework drawing from prior studies in experimental cognitive psychology. The field of stylistics has continuously incorporated substantial findings from psychological research, particularly in the realm of text processing and interpretation. However, the body of psychological research referenced in this context comprises a collection of scholarly articles, each exploring to varying degrees how readers perceive and react to diverse narratives or different versions of the same narrative. Primarily quantitative and statistically oriented, these studies predominantly involve judgment tasks and reading time assessments. These methodologies are employed to examine readers' expectations and preferences regarding specific narrative outcomes.For example, in a study by Egidi and Gerrig (2006), the mechanisms underlying readers' attention to the alignment between characters' actions and their goals are investigated. According to Egidi and Gerrig, participants in reading time experiments typically exhibit an ability to detect any inconsistencies between the two. Additionally, readers appear to process a narrative outcome more rapidly if it has been contextualized within a preceding biasing framework. Furthermore, readers tend to align more closely with characters' objectives when these objectives are presented with a heightened sense of pace. In a separate investigation conducted by Rapp and Gerrig (2005), the researchers argue that in the absence of explicit textual cues, readers exhibit a propensity towards desiring characters' success rather than their failure In the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the clause is conceptualised as a grammatical structure that fulfills three separate semantic functions via its lexical and grammatical components. These semantic functions are realised through three metafunctions: the textual metafunction, which communicates the message; the interpersonal metafunction, which articulates the proposition; and the experiential metafunction, which embodies the event. Thus, the clause operates to integrate and synchronise these layers of meaning (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004, p. 588).

2. The Systemic Functional Approach to Arabic

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) utilises a constituency hierarchy characterised by ranked units, wherein each subsystem is allocated a specific rank determining its hierarchical position within the broader system and its relationship to other constituents. These subsystems encompass clauses, groups/phrases, words, and morphemes. Clauses are comprised of groups or phrases, which, in turn, are composed of words, with morphemes constituting the smallest rank and clauses representing the largest (Matthiessen, 2002: 5). In contrast to certain perspectives, a sentence is defined as a clause complex and does not denote a higher rank (Bardi, 2008, p. 27). It is crucial to emphasise that complexes can be established across various ranks, as the system relies on paradigmatic interdependency relations rather than linear, structural constituency

ones (Matthiessen, 2002). Additionally, a unit of a higher rank can be integrated into a unit of a lower rank, a phenomenon referred to as rankshift (as observed in Matthiessen, 1995: 99). Bardi (2008, p. 27-28) provides an exemplification of this phenomenon:

"الرجل الذي حدثتك عنه ينتظر في الخارج"

(The man [[whom I told you about]] is waiting outside.)In the example above, a clause is found embedded within the nominal group, positioned at the outset to denote subjecthood. This process of 'rankshifting,' as observed earlier, extends to other elements along the rank scale, which may manifest in either simplex or complex forms. The concept of rank functions as a guiding principle in the allocation of language subsystems, such as lexicogrammar, across a hierarchical structure of units. The rank scale serves as an indicator of the system's intricacy, with complexity increasing as the ranks' members ascend (Bardi, 2008, p. 28).According to (SFG), complexes can be constructed within units of any rank through expansion. For example, a simple clause can be linked to another simple clause through a logical or semantic relation, resulting in the formation of a clause complex. When a clause complex consists of more than two simple clauses, each individual connection is termed a clause nexus. Taxis refers to the degree of interdependence between clauses. In a paratactic nexus, both clauses are considered to have equal status, with each forming an independent proposition and thus eligible for individual analysis. Conversely, in cases where the clauses forming a clause complex are perceived to have unequal status, only the main clause is deemed an independent proposition and consequently subject to analysis. Furthermore, complex clauses may be constructed by combining parataxis and hypotaxis (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, p. 438-440). The simplexes constituting a clause complex are categorised as 'primary' or 'secondary.' In parataxis, the primary clause is the initial one, serving as the initiating clause. Conversely, in hypotaxis, the primary clause is the dominant independent one, regardless of its sequence within the clause complex. Subsequently, in clause complexes, it is possible to discern sub-complexes that are either sequenced or nested (Othman and Al Qutob, 2022, p.2)In contrast to hypotactic structures, paratactic structures in Arabic demonstrate a distinct characteristic whereby dismantling the structure yields appropriately constructed clauses, each fully articulated and juxtaposed. These clauses may or may not be connected by a conjunction. Furthermore, if a conjunction is present, it may persist following the full stop, serving a textual rather than a logical function, be omitted entirely, or be replaced by another paratactic conjunction conveying a comparable logical or semantic relation (Othman and Al Qutob, 2022, p. 4). According to Simpson (2014, p. 6) and in compliance with the textual Hallidayan metafunction, simple sentences, asyndetically coordinated ones or syndetically coordinated clauses with the paratactic pattern signal reading pace acceleration.

3. Literature Review

Inspecting Arabic from the perspective of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) has been the interest of various studies. The most prominent research on (SFG) in Arabic is done by Mohamed Ali Bardi. His dissertation (2008) presents a systemic functional description of the Arabic grammar. This dissertation represents a thorough textual analysis of Arabic grammar, employing systemic functional theory and drawing upon systemic functional descriptions of other languages. Divided into six chapters, excluding the introduction and conclusion, the dissertation has two main objectives. The primary objective is to provide a systematic exposition of Arabic grammar. The secondary is to evaluate the contributions of Arab grammarians, examining their potential for further development and possible integration into contemporary linguistic frameworks. Each of the remaining four chapters is dedicated to one of the three metafunctions, with the ideational metafunction spanning two chapters.Bardi (2022) has also studied the Arabic system of TEMPORAL VALUES from the perspective of (SFG). His article aims to elucidate the TEMPORAL VALUE system in Arabic by adopting a methodology akin to that of Matthiessen in his 1996 systemic functional analysis of tense in English. By focusing on the individual word level rather than the level of grammatical groups, previous studies have overlooked various aspects of Arabic grammar, such as serial verb constructions and the intricate interdependency potential of verbal units. Drawing on Comrie's research on ASPECT, which suggests that certain languages categorised as "aspect" languages can express diverse temporal values, Bardi proposes reconsidering temporal descriptions with greater flexibility. Instead of categorising languages into two distinct groups, it may be more appropriate to position them along a temporal spectrum, with tense at one end and aspect at the other.

Rashid and Jameel (2017) work is a linguistic examination of Halliday's (SFG) Theory within political texts from 2012. M.A.K. Halliday's (SFG) is employed to scrutinise the speeches delivered by President Barack Obama during the 2012 election campaign and David Cameron's address at the Conservative Party

Conference. The aim is to identify the rhetorical strategies inherent in the transitivity system as revealed through the analysis of these speeches. The findings of the study reveal that the analysis of process types in the speeches of Barack Obama and David Cameron in 2012 indicates that material processes are the most frequently utilised types in both instances. Furthermore, the analysis suggests that this theoretical framework is applicable across diverse cultural contexts, situations, and temporal settings. AL-Zubaidy's (2022) study examines and characterises the occurrence of ideational metaphors within two English short stories from the twentieth century, employing Grammatical Metaphor theory by Halliday (1994) for textual analysis. The stories under scrutiny are an American tale, "The Mansion" (1910-11) by Henry Jackson van Dyke Jr., and a British narrative, "Home" (1951) by William Somerset Maugham. One objective is to gather statistically verifiable evidence regarding the prevalence of Grammatical Metaphor nominalisation in academic and scientific texts compared to fiction, as suggested by Halliday and Martin (1993). Another goal is to investigate any notable discrepancies in the usage of GM between the two authors The research methodology of her study involves identifying, describing, and statistically analysing the frequencies of ideational Grammatical Metaphor structures within both fictional texts, with a focus on their comparative textual densities in terms of word count. The findings reveal that while Grammatical Metaphor structures are present in both the American and British short stories, they are statistically infrequent in both instances, constituting a minimal proportion (0.0064% for T1 and 0.0137% for T2) of the total text. These extremely low frequency rates, falling well below the threshold of 1% of each text's volume, support previous observations regarding the prevalence of Grammatical Metaphor nominalisation in academic and scientific texts rather than fiction. The comparable low densities of usage do not yield significant differences in the employment of Grammatical Metaphor by the two authors What distinguishes the present study from existing research in SFG, particularly those investigations focusing on Halliday's metafunctions, is its analysis of extracts from an actual novel particularly; "The Fifth Corpse" by Hussein Al-sayyed (2014) to identify linguistic elements that encourage rapid reading. Simpson's (2014) analysis is geared towards identifying passages likely to be read quickly and subsequently examining them within the framework of (SFG) to discern their defining characteristics.

4. Methodology

4.1 Data Collection

The study employs Simpson's (2014) framework to analyse a selected extract from Hussein Al-Sayyed's thriller novel "The Fifth Corpse" published in (2014). Simpson's approach anticipates a heightened narrative pace, as a characteristic of the thriller genre, aimed at building tension and excitement to engage readers and propel them through the storyline. The selected extract is chosen because it represents a crucial moment in the novel, where a significant event unfolds rapidly, driving the narrative towards pivotal turning points.

4.2 Data Analysis

According to Simpson (2014), investigating the factors contributing to pace acceleration in a text requires examining a range of characteristics. However, this study specifically concentrates on only one distinct feature: Halliday's textual metafunction. Following the selection of the extract that is expected to demonstrate pace acceleration, it underwent qualitative textual analysis to validate this assertion. Subsequently, this qualitative analysis was complemented by quantitative analysis. The extract was scrutinised within the framework of Halliday's metafunctions to identify sentence types and any conjunctions used.

5. Findings and Discussion

The following extract from "The Fifth Corpse" has been selected and subjected to an extensive examination utilising Halliday's two metafunctions.

وانتبه متولي لشيء ما, وهو ينظر إلى المناضد التى ترقد عليها الجثث, فقال ببطء وحذر:−

- كم عدد الجثث بالمشرحة ؟

أجابه عم منصور , وهو ينظر إليه بدهشة:−

- إنها خمس .. لماذا تسأل؟ ..!

أشار متولي بيد مرتعشة إلى المناضد التي رقدت عليها الجثث ,وقال بصوت مخنوق:−

- لكن الجثث ها هنا ست ..

و تحولت أبصارهم على الفور إلى المناضد التى تحوي جثثاً مغطاة لتحصيها .. كانت ستاً بالفعل .. اضطربت قلوبهم بشدة ,وشعر عم منصور بالحمض الحارق يتصاعد إلى فمه, ليملأ أنفه برائحته النفاذة, وهاجس مخيف يلح على عقله..

أيكون جثمان جمال هو الجثة الجديدة السادسة ؟

تجمدوا فى أماكنهم للحظة ,دون أن يفعلوا أى شيء , إلا أن عم منصور أخرج نفسه بسرعة من جموده, وهتف فيهم, وهو يتجه إلى أقرب منضدة منه ليفحصه:-

- لا تقفوا هكذا كالأصنام .. تحركوا وافحصوا كل منضدة, لنرى من أين أتت الجثة السادسة.

واندفع كل منهم إلى أقرب منضدة منه, وكشف غطاءها, ولم يكن بها غير الجثث القديمة ,فاتجهوا الى الصف الثاني ...

كان جمال راقدا بالمنضدة الأخيرة, وكان متولي من وجده, فأخذ يصرخ برعب حين كشف الغطاء , لتصطدم عيناه بوجه جمال الشاحب.

(الجثة الخامسة, ٢٠١٤,87-86)

The findings of this analysis are consistent with the characteristics linked to pace acceleration as outlined by Simpson (2014). More precisely, the examined passages in this study display certain characteristics that correspond to Simpson's (2014) descriptions of reading pace acceleration. These unique attributes will be expounded upon in the following subsections.

5.1 The Textual Metafunction

Starting with the textual metafunction, Table 1 below presents a depiction of the clausal structure of the extract:

Table 1: The Clausal Structure

The sentences	Type of Coordination	Coordinators
وانتبه متولي لشيء ما,	**Syndetically coordinated**	(و)**(paratactic)**
وهو ينظر إلى المناضد التي ترقد عليها الجثث,	**Syndetically coordinated**	(وal -(circumstanti) **(hypotactic)**
	Syndetically coordinated	(التي)**(hypotactic)**
فقال ببطء و حذر:	**Syndetically coordinated**	(ف)**(paratactic)**
كم عدد الجثث بالمشرحة ؟	**Simple**	None
أجابه عم منصور ,	**Simple**	None
وهو ينظر إليه بدهشة:	**Syndetically coordinated**	(circumstanti-al و) **(hypotactic)**
إنها خمس ..	**Simple**	None
لماذا تسأل؟	**Simple**	None
أشار متولي بيد مرتعشة إلى المناضد التي رقدت عليها الجثث	**Syndetically coordinated**	(التي) **(hypotactic)**
وقال بصوت مخنوق:	**Syndetically coordinated**	(و)**(paratactic)**
لكن الجثث ها هنا ست	**Syndetically coordinated**	(لكن)**(paratactic)**
وتحولت أبصارهم على الفور إلى المناضد التي تحوي جثثاً مغطاة لتحصيها	**Syndetically coordinated**	(و)**(paratactic)**
	Syndetically coordinated	(التي)**(hypotactic)**
	Syndetically coordinated	(لـ) **(hypotactic)**
كانت ستاً بالفعل	**Simple**	None
اضطربت قلوبهم بشدة,	**Simple**	None

Arabic	Structure	Pattern
وشعر عم منصور بالحمض الحارق يتصاعد إلى فمه,	Syndetically coordinated / Asyndetically coordinated	(و)(paratactic) / None
ليملأ أنفه برائحته النفاذة,	Syndetically coordinated	(لـ ()hypotactic)
وهاجس مخيف يلح على عقله	Syndetically coordinated	(و)(paratactic)
أيكون جثمان جمال هو الجثة الجديدة السادسة ؟	Simple	None
تجمدوا في أماكنهم للحظة ,دون أن يفعلوا أي شيء	Syndetically coordinated	(دون ان)(hypotactic)
الا أن عم منصور أخرج نفسه بسرعة من جموده,	Syndetically coordinated	(الا ان)(paratactic)
وهتف فيهم,	Syndetically coordinated	(و)(paratactic)
وهو يتجه إلى أقرب منضدة منه ليفحصها:	Syndetically coordinated	(و)circumstanti-al (hypotactic)
	Syndetically coordinated	(لـ) (hypotactic)
لا تقفوا هكذا كالاصنام	Simple	None
تحركوا وافحصوا كل منضدة,	Syndetically coordinated	(و)(paratactic)
لنرى من أين أتت الجثة السادسة	Syndetically coordinated / Asyndetically coordinated	(لـ)(paratactic) / None
واندفع كل منهم إلى أقرب منضدة منه,	Syndetically coordinated	(و)(paratactic)
وكشف غطاءها	Syndetically coordinated	(و)(paratactic)
ولم يكن بها غير الجثث القديمة ,	Syndetically coordinated	(و)(paratactic)
فاتجهوا الى الصف الثاني	Syndetically coordinated	(ف)(paratactic)
كان جمال راقداً بالمنضدة الأخيرة,	Syndetically coordinated	(و) (paratactic)
وكان متولي من وجده,	Syndetically coordinated	(من)(hypotactic)
فأخذ يصرخ برعب حين كشف الغطاء,	Syndetically coordinated	(ف) (paratactic)
	Syndetically coordinated	(حين)(hypotactic)
لتصطدم عيناه بوجه جمال الشاحب.	Syndetically coordinated	(لـ) (hypotactic)

Table 2 The Frequencies and Percentages of the Clausal Structure :

No. of structures	Simple sentences	Asyndetic coordination	Syndetic coordination with a paratactic pattern	Syndetic coordination with a hypotactic pattern
40	8	2	17	13
Percentages	20%	5%	42.5%	32.5%
The total number of connections that sustain NU				**67.5%**

In this extract, although the hypotactic pattern makes up 32.5%, the majority of its clausal structure, totaling 67.5%, supports NU. This proportion consists of simple, paratactic patterns as well as the asyndetic pattern of coordination which only appears once. As illustrated in Table 2, the paratactic pattern accounts for 42.5%. It is predominantly constructed with the coordinator (و). This pattern collaborates with simple sentences which constitute 20% of the text, and asyndetic coordination, which participates with 5%. Collectively, these elements play a role in sustaining NU, that is why, this criterion is met.

6. Conclusion

Simpson (2014) notes that within a narrative, certain sections are read quickly; with a shift in pace influenced by various factors. One such factor is the textual structure itself. Employing Halliday's (2004) textual metafunction, Simpson aims to identify the structural characteristics of these rapid-reading passages. To achieve this, an extract has been selected from an Arabic novel entitled "The Fifth Corpse" to identify its textual characteristics. While Simpson acknowledges previous examinations of rapid reading, he emphasises the tailored selection of textual material for this specific experimentThe analysis reveals that the clausal structures of the selected extract predominantly consist of simple sentences, asyndetically coordinated clauses, and paratactic patterns with coordinating conjunctions. These structural features enhance readability and contribute significantly to the sense of pace acceleratio In a narrative context, these features streamline the reading experience, propel the narrative forward, intensify emotional engagement, and cultivate an atmosphere of anticipation. Consequently, they play a crucial role in enhancing the narrative's sense of acceleration, ensuring sustained reader engagement and eagerness to progress through the story.

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