

A Critical Stylistic Analysis of Regret in Kuipers' *Life on the Refrigerator Door*

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Abstract

This study investigates regret in Kuipers' novel "*life on the refrigerator door*" It tries to answer the following questions: what are the critical stylistic tools that are employed in the novel? Which is the most dominant tool among others? How is the ideology of regret expressed throughout the novel? Accordingly, the study aims at: setting out the critical stylistic devices used in the novel, identifying the most frequent tool amongst the suggested ones, and extracting the ideology of regret throughout the novel. To fulfill the aims, the study follows several procedures: presenting an overview of critical Stylistics, regret, the novel and the model of the study. Analyzing extracts selected from the novel then the findings and the conclusions are mentioned. The conclusions are: negating is the most dominant tool followed by naming. Questioning is the least used tool. All the tools are used in different ratios concerning the ideology of regret.

Key words: critical , stylistics , regret , Kuipers , novel.

الملخص

تستقصي هذه الدراسة الندم في رواية كوبرز (حياة على باب الثلاجة). تحاول الدراسة الاجابة على الاسئلة التالية: ما هي ادوات الاسلوبية النقدية المستعملة في الرواية؟ اي من الادوات هي الاكثر استعمالا في الرواية؟ كيف ترجمت ايدولوجية الندم؟ على ضوء الاسئلة المذكورة أنفا تهدف الدراسة الى: تحديد الادوات المستعملة في الرواية وذكر الاداة الاكثر استعمالا من بينها واستخلاص ايدولوجية الندم من الرواية. لتحقيق الاهداف تتبع الدراسة مجموعة من الاجراءات منها: تقديم شرح عن الأسلوبية النقدية، الندم، ونبذة عن الرواية. شرح الادوات المستعملة في التحليل وتحليل مقاطع مختارة من الرواية. ثم ذكرت النتائج والخلاصة. اهم نتائج البحث هي: النفي هي الاداة الاكثر استعمالا في الرواية يتبعها التسمية. طرح الاسئلة هي الاداة الاقل استعمالا. جميع الأدوات المقترحة تم توظيفها في الرواية ولكن بنسب مختلفة لأثبات ايدولوجية الندم. الكلمات المفتاحية: النقدية ، الأسلوبية ، الندم ، كوبرز ، الرواية.

1. Critical Stylistics (CS)

According to Jeffries (2014), critical stylistics emerged as a response to the growing influence of critical discourse analysis, which examines how ideologies, identity, and inequality are conveyed in texts within social and political contexts.

Although both critical stylistics and critical discourse analysis were established by Roger Fowler, they have become increasingly distinct from each other over time (Jeffries,2014).

Critical Stylistics, a branch of applied linguistics founded by Lesley Jeffries, is concerned with analyzing the relationship between textual choices and ideology. It aims to reveal the implicit ideologies conveyed through language to better understand the role of language in reproducing social identities and inequalities. Critical Stylistics

offers a more developed theory and methodology than Critical Discourse Analysis, providing a comprehensive set of tools for analyzing the linguistic choices made by text producers (Jeffries, 2010).

Tabbert (2013) notes that stylistics, which analyzes both literary and non-literary texts using linguistic techniques, is at the core of Critical Stylistics.

According to Jeffries (2014) ,at the heart of CS is the idea that there is a level of meaning between the formal meaning of Saussure's "langue" and the other meaning of language in use, that is referred to as "parole." At this level, texts utilize language to give certain view of the world or a fictional nature, and the analyst needs to understand how the text constructs this world. The main items used in Critical Stylistics analysis are "textual-conceptual functions," which aim to understand how a text creates meaning in different ways. These functions are crucial for understanding the conceptual framework of a text and how it presents the world or fictional world in a specific way.

Jeffries (2014) suggests that there is no any relation between linguistic form and meaning, and textual-conceptual functions are an essential part of the stylistic way to critical language study.

2. Ideology

Ideology is a concept that refers to a set of organized ideas, beliefs, or values that are expressed and reproduced in discourse. According to Kress and Hodge (1979) and, ideology is a systematic group of thoughts that are set from a certain point of view, which makes it inherently subjective.

To van Dijk (1995, p.21) “ideology is not only as a system of ideas but specific basic frameworks of social cognition with specific social structures and specific cognitive and social functions”.

Ideologies become most influential when they are naturalized and accomplish the state of commonality , according to Fairclough (1992). Common-sense ideologies enable ruling by acceptance, which is at the core of a critical method to ideology (Mayr, 2008).

Voloshinov (1986) asserts that where there is a sign, there is ideology, and any phenomenon working as an ideological sign has some kind of material embodiment, such as sound, color, physical mass, or body gesture. Therefore, it is impossible to detach ideology from any text, as Fairclough (1992) and Jeffries and Walker (2012) note that all texts carry ideology, whether consciously or unconsciously influenced by ideology.

3. Regret

One of the definitions of regret is that it is a negative feeling initiated on an upward, self-experience, counterfactual inference (Gilovich & Medvec, 1995; Zeelenberg, 1999).

Regret feels negative because it includes a fault in personal attitude that someone should have done something differently.

Wrosch and Heckhausen (2002) finds out that older people have regrets based only rarely on personal actions. As their own time fade with progressing years, so too do the most painful and self- judgment regrets, to be replaced instead of regrets that focus on the actions of other people.

An unhappy emotion associated with knowledge of the refused choice's outcome (Camille et al. 2004).

Rorty (1980: 496) describes regret as "a particular type of painful feeling, a pang, a stab, waves of stabs."

4.1 Expressing Regret

To express regret , the following expressions are used:

I ought to have , I should have, If only I had ,I wish I had ,I regret , I'm sorry; I oughtn't to have , I shouldn't have , If only I hadn't I wish I .

4. The Novel

Alice Kuipers' debut novel, "Life on the Refrigerator Door," has garnered international recognition, captivating readers in 28 countries. The book is compelling narrative and poignant exploration of the relationship between a mother and her daughter have earned it numerous accolades, including being named a New York Times book for the Teen Ageds . In this clever and heartfelt portrayal, the novel highlights the daily rush of our lives, emphasizing the importance of making time for those we cherish. It beautifully underscores the significance of expressing our feelings in the limited moments we have. "Life on the Refrigerator Door" is an intimate and unique story, told through a series of notes and letters exchanged between a mother and her fifteen-year-old child during a challenging family troubles. Claire, the young protagonist, resides with her mother, and their mode of communication revolves around these heartfelt messages adorning their refrigerator. Although her parents are divorced, they maintain a stable and supportive relationship. As Claire navigates the ups and downs of her teenage years, she finds herself growing distant from her mother, with face-to-face conversations becoming rare. However, a pivotal note from her mother catches her attention, revealing her vulnerability and a secret she has been carrying. Claire's world is shaken as she realizes her mother's battle with breast cancer. Filled with a sense of unease, she realizes the urgency to spend more meaningful time with her mom. Through the exchange of poignant notes, Claire reflects on the cherished memories they shared, expressing her pride in her mother's strength and resilience during these trying times. "Life on the Refrigerator Door" serves as a powerful reminder of the love and appreciation we often fail to express until faced with profound circumstances (web source).

5. The Model of the Analysis

The tools of the analysis are based on Jeffries (2010) and Quirk ,et al. (1985). They are as the following:

5.1 Naming and Describing

Naming and describing, referred to as "naming" hereafter, focuses on the linguistic mechanisms that enable a text producer to describe a referent (Jeffries, 2010). According to Jeffries (2007), the choice of names to refer to entities is one of the most influential decisions made by writers.

Jeffries (2010) acknowledges that the noun phrase, beyond the head noun itself, has the potential to convey additional information about the referent. Text producers can encapsulate opinions and assumptions about the referent through pre- and postmodification of the head noun. By presenting these assumptions and opinions as inherent to the referent, they become harder to challenge (Jeffries, 2010).

In this chapter, our focus lies on the side of the sentence that typical "names" an entity, which is the noun names or nominal words. The noun phrase often functions as the grammatical subject or object of a verb and carries semantic roles such as the initiator of an action (referred to as "Actor") or the recipient of an action (known as "Goal") (Jeffries, 2010).

Naming encompasses various linguistic constructions, including the selection of a noun to denote a referent, the practices of a noun phrase with modifiers to provide further details about the reality of the referent, and the decision to use a specific "name" instead of expressing it as a verbal process.

Note: The concept of naming and describing explores the ways in which language allows us to categorize and characterize entities. By investigating the choices made in naming and the additional information conveyed through the noun phrase, we gain insights into the complexities of language use and its impact on communication.

I. Choice of Nouns

In accordance with Jeffries (2010), the process of naming things involves three distinct types of choices. Firstly, there is the representative and regional choice, where speakers encounter other dialects that serve as sources of prejudice or discrimination. Secondly, there is the choice of names with ameliorative or pejorative connotations, which holds greater ideological potential compared to other types. These names reveal the speaker's opinions and attitudes. Lastly, there is the choice of metaphorical expression, which requires the hearer/reader to engage in more cognitive processing to comprehend its meaning. This type of choice can also carry ideological implications.

II. Modification of Nouns

Jeffries (2010) elucidates that noun modifications play a crucial role in the formation of sentences and clauses. Through morphological and syntactic techniques, these modifications enable the naming of referents and create ideological effects. Rather than directly forming sentence propositions, the nominal component assumes the occurrence of something. Consequently, the sentence assertion revolves around the relationship between the named entities. While verbs play a central role in establishing this connection, noun modifications hold immense potential for ideological packaging. They fill the noun phrase with a wealth of diverse information, facilitating the presentation of ideas and encouraging agreement.

In summary, the nominal part of clauses tends to be less subjected to questioning. The recipients (readers/hearers) are discouraged from suspecting or challenging the relationship between elements within the noun phrase, as its ideological implications are skillfully packaged to deter scrutiny (Jeffries, 2010).

3. ♡ Negation

Negation, as a conceptual practice, extends beyond simply negating a verb, according to Jeffries (2010). It serves as a powerful linguistic device that draws attention to the absence of something while simultaneously hinting at its possible presence (Nahajec, 2012). In a sense, it creates a hypothetical replica of reality (Jeffries, 2010).

Braber et al. (2015) propose that negation enables readers to comprehend the range of alternatives through both negatively and positively mind imagery. For example, the

sentence "This is a rabbit" conjures an image of a rabbit, while "This is not a rabbit" may prompt the reader to mentally envision a crossed-out picture or even make it vanish. This hypothetical perspective possesses persuasive power, facilitating more effective conceptualization by the text's recipients.

According to Jeffries (2010), negation in texts can carry ideological and/or narrative significance. It can reinforce a narrative by highlighting what is absent from it, persuade others ideologically, or imagine a desired alternative world. Jeffries focuses on the capacity of negation to shape the reader's mental representation, presenting a case that starkly contrasts with the one asserted in the given text.

Jeffries (2010) identifies several triggers for negation, including:

- *Syntactic triggers: These involve the addition of a negative particle with an auxiliary verb or a dummy verb.

- *Pronouns: Words like "no one," "none," "nobody," and "nothing" function as triggers.

- *C- Lexical words: Certain words carry negative connotations, representing broad categories such as nouns (absent, lacks), verbs (rejects, excluding), adjectives (scarce, absence), and adverbs (seldom, rare).

- *Morphological words : Negated adjectives can be formed by adding a prefix (e.g., irrational, unprofessional), negated verbs by using specific forms (e.g., dislike, deactivate), and negated nouns through the addition of a prefix (e.g., inability, inactivity).

In summary, negation plays a vital role in textual discourse, exerting ideological and narrative influences. Through various triggers and linguistic mechanisms, it invites readers to consider alternative perspectives and shapes their mental representations of the text's content (Jeffries, 2010).

3.3 Questioning

In order to enhance the analysis of the novel and achieve optimal results, the researcher includes the tool of questioning, as required by the research objectives.

According to Quirk et al. (1985), there are three main categories of questions based on the type of response they anticipate:

1. Yes-No Questions:

These questions expect a reply in the form of affirmation or negation. They are formed by putting the operator before the subject and typically using a rise intonation. Examples include:

1- Have you finished the book?

2- Has the boat left?

3- Was our team beaten?

Yes-no questions can be positive or negative, as seen in:

4- Do you really want to leave now?

5- Don't you believe me?

Additionally, there are tag questions that express maximum conduciveness. They consist of a positive or negative orientation appended to a sentence, such as:

6- The car has not left, has it?

7- Jerry knew you, didn't he?(Quirk ,et al. 1985)

2. Wh-Questions:

These questions expect a response within an open range of possibilities. They are known as "Wh-questions" and are formed by placing an interrogative word (e.g., who, whom, whose, what, which, when, where, how, and why) at the beginning of the sentence. Examples include:

8- What 's her name?

9- How old is she? (Quirk ,et al. 1985)

3. Alternative Questions:

These questions wait an answer that selects one of two or more presented options. They are referred to as "alternative questions." Examples include:

10- Would you like to go to the cinema or stay at home?(Quirk ,et al. 1985)

5.Data Analysis

The texts are chosen randomly from the novel to extract the ideology of regret.

Text 1

MOM!

SORRY WE FOUGHT! I was only saying that I've been doing loads of stuff around the house. Then I feel bad because of everything else that's going on. How are you feeling now?

Claire

The Analysis

Claire is writing a letter to her mother expressing her feelings saying that she is regretting her fight with her mother the other day. Regret is a bad feeling, so ,she admits that she feels bad because of everything going on with her. She employs modification of nouns as in "loads of stuff" to express her reasons to her mother. She utilizes "questioning" to ask her mother about whether she feels bad or not . The letter comprises regret translated in apology.

Text 2

Don't apologize, Mommy. I should be the one saying sorry. I wish I hadn't given you such a hard time over Michael in the spring. Is it my fault? Is all this my fault?

Claire

The Analysis

Another letter from Claire to her mother reflecting the remorse that she feels because she thinks that she hurts her mother. Claire says "mommy" to win her mother's heart and sympathy to relieve herself. She repeats the question twice as an emphasis on her feeling but about what she did to her mother. The verb "wish" is used to reveal the ideology of regret by Claire.

Text 3

Claire-Bear,

I'm sorry. I've been acting like I'm the only one in the world—like you don't need me to be there for you, and that I don't need you to be there with me. I do need you, darling.

The Analysis

The mother apologizes about being selfish as if she is regretting her previous attitude toward her daughter. She confesses that she needs her which means that she regrets not making her sense this need. She employs the emphasis form "do need" to make her daughter feel her real intention

Text 4

But what about all the other things I wanted to do? I've never been to Africa. I've never read Proust. I've never learned to play the piano or even read music, those black blobs on the page that people can translate into beautiful sounds are a mystery to me and they may always be. I've never sky-dived, I've never seen the desert, I've never been fishing.

The Analysis

The above extract is taken from a long letter from Elizabeth to her daughter. She opened herself up and said whatever came into her mind. She talks about everything she had never done in her life. She feels like she is short of time she cannot do the things that she wanted to do. Now she realizes that she had to spend time on things that she loves, things that she dreamed of not to delay everything later and now she finds herself out of time. She uses the words "beautiful sounds, the desert" to refer to everything that she wanted to do in her life. This extract from this letter represents the ideology of the writer of the whole novel which is appreciate every moment in your life, don't waste time, don't wait things to come to you but you do whatever you like. Elizabeth is wondering about what the things that she wanted to do. She asked her daughter but in the real meaning she asked herself why did I waste all my time and I did not do what I wanted to do. The writer through this question reflects her ideology of regret by making the character asks herself and asks her daughter about this thing.

In this letter, negating is important because she is talking about the things that she had never done before so she used "never" six times to reveal her regret on the things that she never have never done.

Text 5

Mom, like you were caught out. I feel like we were both caught out. I wish we'd had more time, Mom. I guess that's all I have to say really. I wish I'd had more time with you. But I'm glad of the time we did have.

The Analysis

Claire writes "more time" she wishes to have more time with her mom but her mom left early. She is regretting not having more time with her mother. She employs "wish" to express her regret. It is a letter of letting thoughts out as if Claire is thinking of her mother loudly telling her about everything she is thinking of.

Table (1) The Distribution of the Tools

Tools	frequency	percentage
Naming	13	39.39%
Negating	16	48.48%
Questioning	4	12.12%
Total	33	100%

Conclusions

Based on the qualitative and the quantitative analysis of the selected data, the following conclusions have been arrived at :

1. Negating is found to be the most frequent used tool in the analyzed data since it aids in revealing the ideology of regret in the text .
2. Naming and describing is employed throughout the data in the second place since it makes communication between the characters easier and helps passing their thoughts and feelings.
3. Questioning comes in the last place. It is not used very often throughout the novel .
٤. All of the suggested tools are employed throughout the novel.

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Web Source

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