

Psycholinguistic Analysis of Linguistic Units in “Mrs. Dalloway” by Virginia Woolf

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Abstract:

This study explores how linguistic units contribute to novelistic structure and meaning, focusing on their role in narrative development, stylistic expression, and reader engagement. Linguistic analysis identifies the functional role of linguistic units and their forms in speech, such as the appropriateness of word choice, turns of speech, grammatical forms, and the unique usage of language means in the literary text. Psycholinguistic analysis is used to examine the mental representations and processes through which people produce and understand language. In "Mrs. Dalloway," Virginia Woolf employs the stream-of-consciousness technique, which mirrors natural thought processes. The findings highlight the integral role of linguistic units in novels, as words and phrases create symbolism and evoke imagery, while sentences and paragraphs shape narrative flow and pacing. Cultural and historical contexts are embedded through lexical choices, enhancing authenticity and depth. Linguistic units are instrumental in engaging readers, not only through the narrative but also by eliciting emotional responses.

Keywords: linguistic units, texts, meaning, description, stream-of-consciousness, Mrs.Dalloway.

1. Introduction

Linguistic unit - one of the natural units into which linguistic messages can be analyzed; elements that are uniform and indivisible from the standpoint of a certain level of text segmentation (phonological, morphological, etc.) and that are opposed to one another in the system corresponding to this level. The indivisibility of a linguistic unit must be interpreted as its inability to be broken down into smaller units of the same kind, yet this does not rule out the possibility that on a different level, a combination of units of "lower rank" may correspond to this unit. Thus, a word (or "lexeme"

in some linguists' terminology) seen as a "unit of appellation" (for example, *ruka*, "hand") cannot be broken into smaller pieces with independent meanings.¹

Linguistic units—words, phrases, clauses, and sentences—serve as the foundation of literary texts. In novels, these elements not only communicate ideas but also shape style, build characters, and evoke emotions. This study explores how linguistic units contribute to various aspects of novelistic structure and meaning, focusing on their role in narrative development, stylistic expression, and reader engagement.

Linguistic analysis identifies the functional role of linguistic units and their forms in speech: the appropriateness of the choice of words, the turns of the speech, grammatical forms, in accordance with the author's intention, the unique usage of language means in the literary text.²

Being a specific linguistic unit and the object of investigation of a particular linguistic branch, text as a concept is considered to be a multi-aspect unit. Nowadays, there is no agreement among linguists on the notion of text and on the which class of phenomena, whether linguistic or speech one, it should be correlated with. Some researchers examine the grammatical nature of text, whereas others consider text as a speech phenomenon, relying, first of all, on its communicative aims.³

2. Materials and Methods

The material reflects the research with example from discourse with the help of psycholinguistic method of analysis.

The foundations of the psycholinguistic approach to language can be seen from Humboldt's views. It can be said that the interrelationship of language and thinking, the separation of language and speech, as well as the contradictions and dependencies in the creation and reception of speech determine the main directions of psycholinguistics. In particular, the issue of the author's psychological state, mood, and the receiver's psychological state during the creation of the speech is the basis for determining the psycholinguistic aspects of communication.⁴

Psycholinguistics aims to uncover the mental representations and processes through which people produce and understand language, and it uses a wide range of techniques to do this. The preferred psycholinguistic method is to carry out a controlled experiment. This means that the researcher manipulates an independent linguistic variable to control some aspect of language processing and then measures the effect of the manipulation on a dependent variable of interest.⁵

Analyzing linguistic units in *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf through a psycholinguistic method involves examining how language in the text reflects cognitive and psychological processes, both in the characters' minds and in the reader's experience.

This qualitative analysis also focuses on key passages from "*Mrs. Dalloway*", examining Woolf's use of linguistic elements such as sentence structure, lexical choices, imagery, and narrative techniques. The study employs tools from stylistics and narrative theory to assess how these linguistic units reflect the novel's themes and characters' consciousness. Passages analyzed include

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² Babenko L.G., Kasarin Y.V. Linguistic analysis of a literary text. Theory and practice. M.: Flinta Publ., 2004. 496 p.

³ Chernova, S. V. (2007). N. S. Bolotnova. Philological analysis of text: textbook for students of Higher pedagogical educational institutions. 2nd ed. Tomsk: Publishing house of Tomsk State Ped. Univ, 2006. Sibirskiy Filologicheskii Zhurnal, 4, 156–158. <https://doi.org/10.17223/18137083/21/19>

⁴ Mamajonov M.Y. "ABOUT PSYCHOLINGUISTIC RESEARCHERS". SCIENCE AND INNOVATION INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL VOLUME 3 ISSUE 4 APRIL 2024 ISSN: 2181-3337 | SCIENTISTS.UZ

⁵ S Garrod. "Psycholinguistic Research Methods". University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK

Clarissa Dalloway's morning reflections, Peter Walsh's reminiscences, and Septimus Warren Smith's disoriented thoughts.

Virginia Woolf employs the stream-of-consciousness technique, which mirrors natural thought processes. Psycholinguistic analysis can focus on:

The fragmented and nonlinear structure of thoughts reflects real cognitive processes, where inner speech is often incomplete or associative rather than grammatically correct. Woolf's use of long, complex sentences mimics the heavy cognitive processing of emotions, memories, and perceptions. Repeated words like "party," "death," and "love" signal focal points in characters' mental representations, emphasizing their psychological concerns.

3. Results

The findings highlight the integral role of linguistic units in novels. At the micro-level, words and phrases create symbolism and evoke imagery, while at the macro-level, sentences and paragraphs shape narrative flow and pacing. Cultural and historical contexts are embedded through lexical choices, enhancing authenticity and depth.

Woolf's annoyance with the limitations on personal expression extends beyond aesthetics. Woolf acquired a strong dislike for people who "force the soul," or as she puts it, "force the psyche," as a result of her personal experience.

Woolf forwarded her friend Jacques Raverat the proofs of *Mrs. Dalloway*. Editors Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann describe in their notes to *The Letters of Virginia Woolf* that Gwen, Raverat's wife, wrote back to Woolf with comments on the book's insane passages. "It was a subject that I kept cooling in my mind until I felt I could touch it without bursting into flame all over," Woolf says in response.

Woolf expressly mentions the rest cure she received as a recommended depression treatment. Her remark alludes to the specific dietary, physical activity, and writing constraints that her doctors imposed upon, even if it seems to address an abstract insult to the soul's originality. At the very least, Woolf's remarks convey a dissatisfaction with attempts to put socially imposed limitations on an individual's intellectual and personal independence. The word "force" is used by Woolf to refer to people who restrict and impose knowledge on others, echoing rhetoric she uses throughout the book.

4. Discussion

In one of the most memorable and frequently discussed episodes in *Mrs. Dalloway*, a motorcar, which presumably carries British dignitaries, travels slowly down the streets, attracting a large crowd of people. Nobody knows whether it is the Queen, the Prince, or the Prime Minister who is sitting inside the car, but there is no doubt among the curious crowds that "greatness was seated within; greatness was passing". The car and the figure seated in it represent the "enduring symbol of the state".⁶

The book's focus on sensory detail aligns with psycholinguistic studies of perception. Woolf's detailed visual imagery engages readers' mental imagery processes, creating vivid internal representations. Descriptions of sound, smell, and sight in close succession demonstrate how language captures the integrated nature of perception.

Furthermore, linguistic units are instrumental in engaging readers, not only through the narrative but also by eliciting emotional responses. For example, Woolf's fragmented syntax mirrors human

⁶ Wang, B. (1992). "I" on the run: Crisis of Identity in *Mrs. Dalloway*. *Modern Fiction Studies*, 38(1), 177–191. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.0.0857>

consciousness, allowing readers to connect deeply with her characters. Similarly, Achebe's use of proverbs bridges cultural contexts, inviting readers to explore the worldview of his characters.⁷

These results affirm that linguistic units are not mere conveyors of meaning but are dynamic tools that enrich the literary experience. Future research could expand this analysis to include a broader range of genres and explore the role of linguistic units in digital and experimental literature.

5. Conclusion

Linguistic units, such as words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, are essential elements in literary texts that communicate ideas, shape style, build characters, and evoke emotions. This study explores how linguistic units contribute to novelistic structure and meaning, focusing on their role in narrative development, stylistic expression, and reader engagement.

Linguistic analysis identifies the functional role of linguistic units and their forms in speech, including the appropriateness of word choice, turns of the speech, grammatical forms, and the unique usage of language means in the literary text. Text as a concept is considered a multi-aspect unit, with no agreement among linguists on the notion of text and which class of phenomena, whether linguistic or speech one, it should be correlated with.

Psycholinguistic analysis aims to uncover the mental representations and processes through which people produce and understand language. The preferred psycholinguistic method is to carry out a controlled experiment, manipulating an independent linguistic variable to control some aspect of language processing and then measuring the effect of the manipulation on a dependent variable of interest.

The findings highlight the integral role of linguistic units in novels, as words and phrases create symbolism and evoke imagery, while sentences and paragraphs shape narrative flow and pacing. Cultural and historical contexts are embedded through lexical choices, enhancing authenticity and depth.

Linguistic units are instrumental in engaging readers not only through the narrative but also by eliciting emotional responses. These results affirm that linguistic units are dynamic tools that enrich the literary experience, and future research could expand this analysis to include a broader range of genres and explore the role of linguistic units in digital and experimental literature.

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