

A Stylistic Approach to Nabokov's *Lolita*

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ABSTRACT

The study attempts to explore the linguistic aspects that are manipulated in Nabokov's *Lolita*, and it aims at determining how the linguistic system alleviates one of the most deviant minds in literary fiction. Thus, the present paper adopts a theory of linguistics to investigate the construction of the character-narrator's mind style.

This paper undertakes a qualitative linguistic analysis for selected several extracts from the novel *Lolita* (1955) by Vladimir Nabokov.

The work provides a thorough examination of transitivity patterns in the text. It also challenges Mills's (1995) generalization of romance scenes in narratives. The work concludes that there are other cases, like *Lolita*, in which the female has an active role in the romantic process and the male is a passive recipient of love.

The study also reaches the conclusion that the linguistic structure used in *Lolita* to represent the paedophilic mind is the possible tool to mitigate and rationalize Humbert's eccentric mind style in the course of the novel.

1. Introduction

In his afterword to *Lolita*, Nabokov wrote: '*Lolita* has no moral in tow . . . for me a work of fiction exists only insofar as it affords me what I shall bluntly call aesthetic bliss' (314)¹. This is apparently one of the sentences that has divided critics into two trends: some critics concentrate on the artistic dimensions of *Lolita*, whereas others

¹ Nabokov, V. V. (1995) *Lolita*. London: Penguin. All extracts in this paper are taken out from the same source.

struggle to ascertain moral insinuations in the text. In this paper the researcher wants to look at the linguistic construction of a paedophile's worldview, concentrating predominantly on the idiosyncrasies of Humbert Humbert's worldview in *Lolita*. This will allow the researcher to discover how abnormal worldviews are manifested in literary genres. In particular, the researcher will examine the notion of —mind style|| (coined by Fowler 1977) with regard to Humbert Humbert's linguistic choices in the novel. Presumably the poetics of linguistic patterns is one of the means by which a deviant mind style can be established normally. Thus, the researcher elucidates how this works by turning to the deviant mind style that Humbert shows throughout *Lolita*. Humbert has a very weird assumption about eye-catching young girls and throughout the novel he goes to great lengths to portray an exact picture of them. He calls these little creatures' "nymphets" and describes them as follows:

Between the age limit of nine and fourteen there occur maidens who, to certain bewitched travelers, twice or many times older than they, reveal their true nature which is not human but nymphic (that is, demoniac); and these chosen creatures I propose to designate a "nymphets."(16)

Further to this, readers will fully understand that Humbert is suffering from nympholepsy, especially when he affirms that to be in love with a nymphet 'you have to be an artist and a madman, a creature of infinite melancholy. . .' (17). Accordingly, readers gradually create an image of what seems to be an unusual mindstyle. For this reason, the researcher draws the concept of mind style from a linguistic-poetic perspective and present how, despite the idiosyncrasies of Humbert's beliefs and worldview, the performance of pedophilia is eased through verbal texture.

2. Research aims

This research aims to explore how the linguistic system in *Lolita* mitigates the paedophilic mind style. The researcher presumes that the linguistic structure of the narrator's (Humbert's) account can be closely scrutinized with respect to mind style, as the term —mind style demonstrates those abnormal minds which are depicted by means of repetitive and distinctive linguistic devices in a text (Fowler 1977). Fowler

also claims that linguistic idiosyncrasies in a text display a characteristic worldview (a way of observing and construing the world).

To the best of my knowledge, no researcher has worked on the linguistic structure in *Lolita* with respect to the study of mind style. Hence, the researcher will be adopting a model of functional framework which was put forward by Simpson (2004) as a basis for my linguistic analysis of the text. The researcher would argue that mind style is a handy practical tool that helps to investigate how the linguistic system in *Lolita* alleviates the paedophilic mind style.

3.Literature review

3.1 Mind style

This term was coined by Fowler (1977) in *Linguistics and the Novel* to designate ‘any distinctive linguistic presentation of an individual mental self’(103) which can explicitly examine a character’s mental picture of life. Fowler derived this notion from Halliday’s (1971) study of transitivity forms in literary texts. Halliday scrutinized the syntactic patterns in Golding’s novel *The Inheritors* and reached the conclusion that these patterns reveal the way in which Neanderthal people conceptualized the environment around them (McIntyre 2006). Thus, Fowler (1977) explains how mind styles are offered through methodical linguistic and textual patterns: ‘Cumulatively, consistent structural options, agreeing in cutting the presented world to one pattern or another, give rise to an impression of a world-view, what I shall call a —mind style’(76).

Semino and Swindlehurst (1996) and Semino (2002) have examined this notion through a cognitive metaphor lens. Semino and Swindlehurst (1996) analyzed the mind style of Bromden in *One Flew Over The Cuckoo’s Nest* by Ken Kesey (1962) and claimed that Bromden’s mechanistic worldview is partly adopted from the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE MACHINES². After her analyses of De Bernières’s novel *Captain Corelli’s Mandolin* and Fowles’s novel *The Collector*, Semino (2002) asserts that mind

² Conceptual metaphors are usually written in SMALL BLOCK CAPITALS.

style reflects ‘those aspects of world views that are primarily personal and cognitive in origin, and which are either peculiar to a particular individual, or common to people who have the same cognitive characteristics’ (97).

She also claims that mind style encompasses cognitive problems and some kind of psychological syndrome³, whereas Leech and Short (1981) argue that mind style has a wide-range scale which is varied from ‘normality’ to ‘deviance’. On that account, Semino (2007) states it is necessary to explore ‘a character’s inner representation of the world they live in’ and the workings of his/her mind, whilst scrutinizing the notion of mind style. Mind style has also been studied by other researchers (Fludernik 1996, Margolin 2003, Palmer 2004, Leech and Short 1981) to ascertain the minds of authors, narrators and characters, in order to portray the mechanisms of distinct minds. To the researcher, mindstyle is a collection of mental habits that are construed through linguistic expressions.

1.2 Linguistic theories

3.2.1 Deviance

“Deviance” is a term which designates the difference between the average frequency of a linguistic property, and its occurrence in the text or corpus (Leech and Short 2007). Besides, Gregoriou (2009) posits that ‘deviations can occur at more than one level of language at the same time’ (28). Short (1996) further distinguishes between linguistic deviation that is ‘grammatical’, ‘lexical’, ‘semantic’, ‘discoursal’, ‘phonological’ and ‘graphological’.

In our everyday sense, we usually use the word ‘deviance’ with a rather negative semantic prosody⁴, to suggest defiance of whatever somebody considers normal. Likewise, Gregoriou (2007) claims the term ‘deviance’ is used in linguistics to designate the difference between what we construe as normal and that, in fact, which is not. Accordingly, in this paper, linguistic deviance will be explored thoroughly as there are abnormalities in *Lolita* which readers take to be, through linguistic

³ See Semino, E. (2011) Deixis and fictional minds. *Style*, 45 (3). pp. 418-440. ISSN 0039-4238

⁴ Semantic prosody is ‘the spreading of connotational colouring beyond single word boundaries’ (Partington 2001). (see also Hunston, S, and Francis, G. (1999). *Pattern Grammar*)

construction, normal. Hence, the researcher argues that deviance is one of the main techniques applied in the novel to depict the reality in a different way.

3.2.2 Linguistic deviance

Leech and Short (1981) postulate that linguistic deviance stands for practicing language in a distinct way, which in turn becomes conspicuous and prominent in some manner. It is understood that stylistic study was primarily born of a response to the imprecision and subjectivity of literary criticism. Instead, stylisticians tried to place criticism on a systematic groundwork (Short 1982).

Literary criticism is literally based on presumed assumptions which lack a practicable source of analysis, while stylistics offers linguistic study and thus possesses a form of objectivity. Moreover, linguistic stylistic analysis could be used as a method for supporting a literary or interpretative view. This systematic examination of a text drops the reader into the text, so the reader's responses can be labelled with some precision (Leech and Short 2007). Nonetheless, this method does have certain flaws (see Fish 1980), but what needs to be highlighted is that:

Looking at writing in this kind of detail helps to reveal important aspects which might otherwise have gone unnoticed, and it also provides detailed and interesting ways of testing out or supporting critical hypotheses about style and meaning which we may have arrived at through our initial reading. (Short 1996: 349)

Therefore, for this paper, the researcher has chosen some stylistic models to work on, such transitivity, syntax, and overlexicalization with respect to mind style. The researcher would argue that *linguistic deviance* is central to alleviating Humbert Humbert's peculiar mind style.

Lolita is Nabokov's dizzying chef-d'oeuvre, first published in France in 1955. The story is narrated by the poet and pervert Humbert Humbert, who is also the main character in the novel. He admits that he is passionate about young girls – 'nymphets' – due to the premature death of his childhood beloved, Annabel Leigh. At first Humbert attempts to possess Lolita sexually and, soon after, artistically. He takes Lolita on a

journey from one state to another so as to be away from the attention of the neighbours.

4.Results and Discussion

4.1 Linguistic deviance in the construction of mind style

4.1.1 Transitivity

Over the last forty years, Halliday 's (1969) ground-breaking study of William Golding's *The Inheritors* has been considered the most influential work in stylistic studies. He uses functional/systemic grammar to examine cognitive confine, the diminished logic of action, and the defamiliarized mind style of the main character, Lok, a Neanderthal man in the novel (see Black 1993 for metaphor, simile and cognition in *The Inheritors*). Wales (2001) states that, 'the different patterns of transitivity are the prime means of expressing our external and internal experiences, which is part of the ideational function of language'(396). Accordingly, transitivity identifies the verb phrase as the central element of the clause and ascertains that the selection of other parts of the clause is based on the choice of verbal element per se (Jeffries and McIntyre 2010). Stylisticians underline the practicality of transitivity in the semantic field of experience, and they study *who or what does what to whom or what*; i.e. how actions are represented, what sorts of actions they are, who performs these actions and to whom they are done. A case in point is Simpson's (1993) '*encoding experience in language: the system of transitivity*' approach. He asserts that transitivity exposes how 'certain meanings'in a text are highlighted, whereas others are complicated or hidden from being perceived.

As a result, transitivity is employed to investigate how the linguistic system of a text expresses a particular worldview and how the reader 's perception is directed towards a specific view in a text. Fowler (1986) summarizes this effective hallmark of textual meaning as: Linguistic codes do not reflect reality neutrally; they interpret, organize, and classify the subjects of discourse. They embody theories of how the world is arranged: worldviews or ideologies (27).

Simpson (2004: 22-26) demonstrates six types of transitivity processes in detail and clarifies the different divisions between the processes as well. Before diving into the

text, a brief summary of the key patterns of transitivity processes will be helpful (see Table 1).

Table1: A Summary of Transitivity Framework

Process name	Subdivision of the process	Further subdivision of the process	Process type	Participant role (s)	
Material	action	intention	doing	Actor (obligatory) Goal (optional)	
		Supervention			
	event				
Mental	Cognition		sensing	Sensor (obligatory) Phenomenon (optional)	
	Perception				
	Reaction				
Behavioural			doing	Behaver (obligatory)	
			sensing		
Verbalization			saying	Sayer (obligatory)	
				Target (optional)	
				Verbiage(optional)	
Relational	intensive	attributive mode	being	Attributive	Carrier (obligatory)
	possessive				Attribute (obligatory)
	Circumstantial	identifying mode		identifying	Identifier
			Identified		
Existential			Existing	Existent	
			Happening		

Material processes are basically processes of *doing*. There are two participant roles related to material processes: the *Actor* (the doer), an obligatory role in the process; and a *Goal*, an optional element in the process which is affected by the Actor.

Mental processes are simply processes of *sensing*. The participant roles associated with mental processes are the *Sensor* (the conscious being that is doing the sensing) and the *Phenomenon* (the entity which is perceived, reacted to or thought about).

Behavioural processes are in between material processes and mental processes; they represent both ‘doing’ and ‘sensing’. They indicate physiological actions such as ‘breathing’ or ‘coughing’ and sometimes depict states of consciousness like ‘sighing’, ‘crying’, or ‘laughing’. They also embody processes of consciousness as forms of behaviour, like ‘staring’, ‘dreaming’ or ‘worrying’.

Verbalization processes are the processes of *saying*. The participant roles related with verbalization processes are the *Sayer*, the *Receiver* and the *Verbiage* (that which is said: ‘content’).

Relational processes are the processes of *being*. In relational processes there is a relationship between two entities, without affecting one another. These processes can be expressed in different ways, such as *intensive* relational processes, which suggest an equivalent relationship between two participants (*x is y*); *possessive* relational processes (*x has y*); and *circumstantial* relational processes (*x is at/in/on/with y*). Identifying the participant roles with respect to relational processes is quite complex because ‘this three-way classification intersects with another distinction between *attributive* and *identifying* relational processes’ (24).

Existential processes simply state that something exists or happens. These processes usually contain the word ‘there’ as a dummy subject, and there is only one participant role: ‘the *Existent*’.

According to Mills (1995), romance scenes in texts are very fruitful for transitivity analyses. Women are *generally* portrayed as *passive* ‘recipients’ of love in erotic passages, while men have the ‘*agent*’ role. Even if women are depicted as out of control (especially when they fall blindly in love) they do not have any active role over the process (150). However, I would argue that Mills’s generalization for romance scenes cannot possibly be applied to all texts. To illustrate how *Lolita* deviates from what Mills theorized, I will examine the language that is used to describe the erotic scenes. I will try to draw readers’ attention to the ‘*who does what to whom?*’ and thereby explain how reality is manipulated in *Lolita*. In doing so, this paper will

provide a clue as to how Humbert’s malicious intentions towards young girls and his paedophilic mind style come to be accepted in the text. In part 1, chapter 13, Humbert arranges the events as if he is describing a scene in a play, so as to try and prevent his readers from thinking that he is a pervert. The act commences on a Sunday morning in June; Humbert and Lolita are sitting in the living room on a sofa, engaging in some symbolic flirtation. Lolita fights over a magazine and moves her body around on the sofa; in the meantime Humbert steals “the honey of a spasm without impairing the morals of a minor.” (62) (Sentences are numbered for ease of reference.)












(1) *Her hair touched* my temple and *her arm brushed* my cheek as *she wiped* her lips with her wrist. (2) Because of the burnished mist through which *I peered at* the picture, *I was* slow in reacting to it, and *her bare knees rubbed* and *knocked* impatiently against each other . . . (3) Next moment, in a sham effort to retrieve it, *she was* all over me. (4) *Caught* her by her thin knobby wrist. (5) *The magazine escaped* to the floor like a flustered fowl. (6) *She twisted* herself free, *recoiled*, and *lay back* in the right-hand corner of the davenport. (7) Then, with perfect simplicity, *the impudent child extended* her legs across my lap . . . (8) *Her legs twitched* a little as *they lay* across my live lap; (9) *I stroked* them; (10) there *she lolled* in the right-hand corner, almost asprawl, *Lola the bobby-soxer, devouring* her immemorial fruit, *singing* through its juice, *losing* her slipper, *rubbing* the heel of her slipperless foot in its sloppy anklet, against the pile of old magazines heaped on my left on the sofa- (58-59)


As regards transitivity patterns in the passage, I will abstract out the *actors* in each process with the lexical realization of each of the processes associated with them:

<u>Actor</u>	<u>Process</u>	<u>Actor</u>	<u>Process</u>
1. a. Her hair	touched	6. a. She	twisted
b. her arm	brushed	b. [she]	recoiled
c. she	wiped	c. [she]	lay back
2. a. I	peered at	7. the impudent child	extended
b. I	was	8. a. Her legs	twitched
c. her bare knees	rubbed	9. I	stroked

3. she was 10. she lolled
 4. [I] caught
 5. The magazine escaped

This analysis shows that Lolita and her body parts have the role of *actor* in twelve processes out of seventeen, whereas Humbert only has four. There is also a reference to the magazine as *actor* (5).


1. a. *Her hair touched* my temple  (material action supervision)
 Affected: Humbert's body part
 b. *her arm brushed* my cheek  (material action supervision)
 Affected: Humbert's body part
 c. *she wiped* her lips with her wrist  (material action intention)
 Affected: ∅
 2. c. *her bare knees rubbed and knocked*
 impatiently against each other  (material action intention)
 Affected: ∅
 3. *She was* all over me  (circumstantial relational process)
 Affected: ∅
 6. a. *She twisted* herself free  (material action intention)
 Affected: ∅
 b. [she] *recoiled*  (material action intention)
 Affected: ∅
 c. [she] *lay back* in the right-hand corner of the davenport  (material action intention)
 Affected: ∅
 7. *The impudent child extended* her legs across my lap  (material action intention)
 Affected: Humbert's body part
 8. a. *Her legs twitched* a little  (material action supervision)
 Affected: ∅
 b. *They lay* across my live lap  (material action intention)
 Affected: Humbert's body part


10. *She lolled* in the right-hand corner  (material action intention)
Affected: \emptyset

Before discussing the effect of having a female character as an *actor* in most of the sentences, I will shed light on those clauses where Humbert has the role of *actor*:


2. a. *I peered at* the picture  (mental perception process)
Affected: \emptyset

b. *I was slow* in reacting to it  (intensive relational process)
Affected: \emptyset

4. [I] *caught* her by her thin knobby wrist  (material action intention)
Affected: Lolita's body part

9. *I stroked* them  (material action intention)
Affected: Lolita's body part

The magazine as an *actor*:

5. *The magazine escaped* to the floor like a flustered fowl  (material event process)
Affected: \emptyset

The interesting point with respect to my analysis is the preponderance of material action intention processes; ten clauses out of seventeen make this choice. What is important here is that most of Lolita's actions are material action intention processes, so when Lolita or parts of her body appear as *actors*, readers presumably view the scene in an explicit way, in which Lolita is deliberately doing actions and stretching herself against Humbert.

On the other hand, her hair, her arm and her legs act superventionally so as to produce the impression that some of Lolita's movements are *accidental*, not intentional. Likewise, two of Humbert's clauses out of four are material action intention processes, but the effect of his role as *actor* in clause (4) is lessened by ellipsis. Therefore, the female character, Lolita, seems to be overpoweringly in control of what happens in the scene.

Lolita or her body parts affect Humbert's body parts in (1a), (1b), (7) and (8b), whereas Humbert only affects Lolita's body parts in (4) and (9). This indicates that it is Lolita who is touching Humbert's body mostly and arousing his sensual desires intentionally. Through these transitivity patterns, Humbert escapes blame and presents the so-called 'reality' of how the actions began, according to his anomalous mind. A further text in which to analyze the transitivity patterns in support of my claim is taken from the Enchanted Hunters hotel scene, where Humbert explains how Lolita offered herself sexually in the bedroom. She wakes up in the morning and Humbert lies beside her on the same bed:

(1)She rolled over to my side, (2) and her warm brown hair came against my collarbone. (3) I gave a mediocre imitation of waking up. (4) We lay quietly. (5) I gently caressed her hair, (6) and we gently kissed [. . .] (7) she drew away and surveyed me. (8) Her cheekbones were flushed, (9) her full underlip glistened, (10) my dissolution was near. (11) All at once, with a burst of rough glee (the sign of the nymphet!), she put her mouth to my ear— (12) but for quite a while my mind could not separate into words the hot thunder of her whisper, (13) and she laughed, and brushed the hair off her face, and tried again, (14) and gradually the odd sense of living in a brand new, mad new dream world, where everything was permissible, came over me as I realized what she was suggesting. (15) I answered I did not know what game she and Charlie had played. (16) "You mean you have never—?" her features twisted into a stare of disgusted incredulity. (17) "You have never—" she started again. (18) I took time out by nuzzling her a little. (19) "Lay off, will you," she said with a twangy whine, hastily removing her brown shoulder from my lips. (20) (It was very curious the way she considered—and kept doing so for a long time—all caresses except kisses on the mouth or the stark act of love either "romantic slosh" or "abnormal".) (21) "You mean," she persisted, now kneeling above me, "you never did it when you were a kid?" (22) "Never," I answered quite truthfully. (23) "Okay," said Lolita, "here is where we start." [. . .] (24) But really these are irrelevant matters; I am not concerned with so-called "sex" at all. (132-4)

In my analysis of this part, I aim to focus on how Humbert views the intercourse scene and what his opinion is of Lolita. I assume that Humbert has a negative opinion about the act of intercourse as he claims in (24) that he is not concerned with sex










whatsoever, suggesting to his readers that his mental image towards sex is negative. On the other hand, he has a positive view regarding Lolita’s body in (2), (8) and (9). This constructs a psychological conflict in Humbert which is reflected through his language. There is a shift in narration in (4) and (6) – ‘We lay quietly’, “we gently kissed” – then Lolita offers herself in (19) and her caresses in (20), and she kneels over Humbert in (21). All together this provides an assumption that their relationship is quite appropriate as Fludernik (2009) posits that, when couples experience exciting events together, they give their accounts of these moments in the first-person plural ‘we’. In addition, this kind of rephrasing of Humbert’s thoughts will provoke readers’ sympathy towards him and push us to believe that Lolita is the one who is stimulating his passions.









Humbert pretends in (12) that he is shocked and confused by “the hot thunder of her whisper” and he is astonished by her suggestion in (14). Whereas Lolita, alongside her command in (19), poses a question three times in (16), “you mean you have never—?”; repeats it in (17), “You have never—?”; and finally asks in (21), “You mean, you never did it when you were a kid?”. She gets an answer in (22): “Never.” This illustrates that Humbert portrays the scene in such a way that he can conceptualise himself as not having an active role in the intercourse. To prove this, an illustration of the processes and the associated actor in the extract is needed:

<u>Actor</u>	<u>Process</u>	<u>Actor</u>	<u>Process</u>
1. she	rolled over	14. a. it	came over
2. her warm brown hair	came	b. I	realized
3. I	gave	c. she	was suggesting
4. We	lay	15. a. I	answered
5. I	caressed	b. I	did not know
6. We	kissed	16. Her features	twisted
7. a. she	drew away	17. She	started
b. [she]	surveyed	18. I	took
8. Her cheekbones	were flushed	19. She	said
9. Her full underlip	glistened	20. a. it	was





10. My dissolution	was	b. [she]	kept doing
11. She	put	21. She	persisted
12. My mind	could not separate	22. I	answered
13. a. She	laughed	23. She	said
b. b. [she]	brushed	24. I	am not concerned
c. [she]	tried		







This analysis provides a general picture of who is doing what in the scene. Seventeen of these processes have Lolita or her body parts as the *actor* (the female character is doing the process); ten have Humbert or parts of his body as the *actor*. There is a brief mention of the first-person plural pronoun in (4) and (6) as *actor*. Now I turn to identifying the number of processes where Lolita is the *actor* and I then clarify who is affected in these processes:

1. *She rolled over to my side*  (material action intention)
Affected: Humbert's possession
2. *her warm brown hair came against my collarbone*  (material action supervention)
Affected: Humbert's body part
- 7.a. *she drew away*  (material action intention)
Affected: \emptyset
- b. [she] *surveyed me*  (mental perception)
Affected: Humbert
8. *Her cheekbones were flushed*  (intensive relational process)
Affected: \emptyset
9. *Her full underlip glistened*  (material action supervention)
Affected: \emptyset
11. *She put her mouth to my ear*  (material action intention)
Affected: Humbert's body part
13. a. *she laughed*  (behavioural process)
Affected: \emptyset
- b. [she] *brushed the hair off her face*  (material action intention)

- Affected: her body part
- c. [she] tried again  (material action intention)
Affected: ∅
14. d. she was suggesting  (verbalization process)
Affected: ∅
16. *Her features twisted*  (material action supervision)
Affected: ∅
17. *She started* again  (material action intention)
Affected: ∅
19. “*Lay off, will you,*” she said with a twangy whine  (verbalization process)
Affected: ∅
20. b. [she] *kept doing* so for a long time  (material action intention)
Affected: ∅
21. *She persisted*  (material action intention)
Affected: ∅
23. “Okay,” said Lolita, “*here is where we start*”  (verbalisation process)
Affected: ∅

Lolita is the *actor* in seventeen processes out of thirty-three in the passage. Out of these seventeen processes, Humbert or his body parts receive the role of the *goal* (patient) in six of them. Let us spell out the processes in which Humbert appears as the *actor*:

3. *I gave* a mediocre imitation of waking  up (material action intention)
Affected: ∅
5. *I gently caressed* her hair  (material action intention)
Affected: Lolita’s body part
10. *My dissolution was*  near (intensive relational process)
Affected: ∅
12. *My mind could not separate* into words  (mental cognition process)

14. c. *I realized*  (mental cognition process)
Affected: \emptyset
14. a. *I answered*  (verbalization process)
Affected: \emptyset
15. b. *I did not know*  (mental cognition process)
Affected: \emptyset
18. *I took time out by nuzzling her a little*  (material action intention)
Affected: Lolita
22. —Never,|| *I answered quite truthfully*  (verbalization process)
Affected: \emptyset
24. *I am not concerned with so-called “sex”*  (circumstantial relational process)
Affected: \emptyset

Out of the ten processes where Humbert or his body parts are the *actors*, Lolita receives the role of *goal* in only two of them. It is clear that there is a difference between the number of processes where Lolita is the *actor* (seventeen) and those in which Humbert is the *actor* (ten).

The overwhelming finding in this analysis is that the processes done by Lolita (the female character) are more or less different from those processes performed by Humbert (the male character). Out of fourteen material action processes, eleven processes are of material action intention; Lolita is the agent in eight and Humbert in only three.

In contrast, of the four mental processes, three processes are of mental cognition in which Humbert is the sensor and one is the mental perception in which Lolita is the sensor. The nine remaining processes are relational, verbalization and behavioural processes. I would assume that the correlation between the transitivity choices in the extract and the portrayal of Lolita (the female character) as an active agent who is leading the intercourse, are done purposely.

The experience of the female character in *Lolita* during the sexual scenes is represented in terms of the actions she does to the male's body, whereas the male's experience is mainly provided as his thoughts and perceptions. Therefore, this analysis of transitivity patterns reveals that it is not always the case that female characters are victims and strong males are active participants in romantic scenes. It is also worth noting that, although Lolita is portrayed as the more active participant in the scene, she does not act on Humbert in a very explicit way.

I suppose that Humbert's description of the situations in the above extracts displays his eccentric mind style, and his perceptions about what has happened and how it began between him and the nymphet. He features Lolita as the doer of the actions in most of the sentences and himself as a passive recipient. In sentence (12) he states, 'for quite a while *my mind could not separate* into words the hot thunder of her whisper'; he overtly claims that he cannot understand what she is offering. In so doing, he deceives most of his readers and maintains their sympathy; by not taking an active part in the intercourse scene, he is possibly not going to be blamed. Furthermore, the transitivity patterns suggest that Humbert sees himself as being commanded to participate in the intercourse, as in (19), "*Lay off, will you,*" she said, and (23), "*Okay,*" said Lolita, "*here is where we start.*" Thus Humbert's volition is weakened as he humbly obeys Lolita. His inactive role and Lolita's leading role serves him to the extent that, at the end of the scene, he states that he is not concerned with 'sex'.

Overall, Lolita's role as an active participant in the intercourse scene is well illustrated. In most of the cases she is only viewed externally, whereas Humbert is primarily given quite a few mental processes. This is a significant finding for my study, as readers generally tend to sympathize with characters whose mental and psychological states are presented in the text. Therefore, I claim that the linguistic description of experience in *Lolita*, via the transitivity patterns, offers a clue as to how Humbert disguises his disgusting lust for his twelve-year-old stepdaughter and portrays his pedophile mind in a normal way.

4.1.2 Syntax (the use of body-parts as pseudo-agents)

In his *Linguistics and the Novel*, Fowler (1977) explores the use of body parts in Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913). He refers to the body parts as 'pseudo-agents' and claims that, by focusing on body parts, Lawrence reveals an 'alienated sex' between Paul and Miriam. It would be fruitful for this study to shed light on the use of pseudo-agents, with respect to their association with Humbert's peculiar mind style. In *Lolita*, however, the use of this syntactic technique suggests further eroticism, which is possibly hidden between the lines and absolves Humbert from criticism. At the beginning of the novel, Humbert tells us that, when he was young, he and Annabel (a lovely child a few months his junior) were 'madly, clumsily, shamelessly, agonizingly in love with each other'(12) and, when he lost her, her 'seaside limbs' and 'ardent tongue' haunted him until, after twenty-four years, he could only break Annabel's spell by incarnating her in Lolita. When Humbert narrates his encounter with Annabel in the mimosa grove, he indicates that Annabel's body parts are responsible for performing sexual actions, apparently beyond the control of the lover:

Her legs, her lovely live legs, were not too close together, and when my hand located what it sought, a dreamy and eerie expression, half-pleasure, half-pain, came over those childish features . . . whenever in her solitary ecstasy she was led to kiss me, her head would bend with a sleepy, soft, drooping movement that was almost woeful, and her bare knees caught and compressed my wrist, and slackened again; and her quivering mouth, distorted by the acidity of some mysterious potion, with a sibilant intake of breath came near to my face. (14)

Humbert camouflages his personal involvement in the action by putting his body part, 'my hand', as a subject (the doer of the action) in only one clause, whereas he gives the leading role to Annabel's body parts in the entire scene: "Her legs, her lovely live legs", "her head", "her bare knees", "her quivering mouth". Hence, through using pseudo-agents as noun phrases, Humbert presumably attains a further alienated tone and covers his lust. After twenty-four years he does the same thing with Lolita in part

1, chapter 11. In this chapter he describes some *nymphetic* features of Lolita and his attempts to trap her into his lap. He again foregrounds body parts, and backgrounds the whole human as a conscious being:

My knuckles lay against the child's blue jeans. She was bare footed; her toenails showed remnants of cherry-red polish and there was a bit of adhesive tape across her big toe . . . Suddenly her hand slipped into mine. (51)

Humbert distances himself from the reader noticing that he is touching Lolita, by referring to the body parts and clothes in noun phrases as *subjects* – ‘my knuckles’, ‘her toenails’, ‘her hand’ – as if these parts of the body are in charge of performing the action; or as *objects*: ‘the child's blue jeans’, ‘her big toe’. In doing so, his frantic physicality is left out of our attention whilst the text pushes us to focus on bits of Lolita's body. Moreover, I would argue that Humbert's use of pseudo-agents as NPs in *Lolita* is intended to mask his disgusting thirst for young children. However, although through noun phrases referring to Annabel's and Lolita's body parts and clothes Humbert disguises his eccentric worldview towards young children's entire bodies, I believe an implied reader can still read Humbert's desire when he sees Lolita, ‘with one knee up under her tartan skirt, she sits tying her shoe’ (44). Therefore, I assume the linguistic construction of the text (the use of pseudo-agents as noun phrases) has a great effect on camouflaging and alleviating the paedophile's mind style.

4.1.3 Overlexicalization

One of the linguistic deviance aspects which offers readers further clues on how Humbert's deviant mind style works in *Lolita*, is his overuse of lexis. Fowler, in *Linguistic Criticism* (1996), names this phenomenon ‘overlexicalization’. He states that ‘overlexicalization is the existence of many synonyms or near-synonyms, but it is useful to generalize from the specialized phenomenon of synonymy to include other, similar, lexical processes’ (218). For Wales (2001), overlexicalization is ‘the surplus of words ‘which can be found in texts where ‘sets of related terms are foregrounded to

emphasize what is being described '(280). It can also be juxtaposed with *underlexicalization*: 'lack of an adequate set of words to express specific concepts, which suggests a limited mind style '(400). In addition, an accumulation of linguistic patterns in some semantic fields designates an aberrant obsession of the speaker 's experience with an object.

In *Lolita*, there are deviant lexical details which should be marked and analyzed to disclose their hidden effect in the text. Humbert provides a close-up on the word "Lolita", so as to depict 'every bright beauty 'of his nymphet. Therefore, I elucidate a precise working of overlexicalization by examining the opening chapter of *Lolita*. Humbert draws repetitively on the word "Lolita" by calling Lolita, the person, different names (five near-synonymous words):

Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. *My sin, my soul. Lo-lee-ta*: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta. She was *Lo*, plain Lo, in the morning, standing four feet ten in one sock. She was *Lola* in slacks. She was *Dolly* at school. She was *Dolores* on the dotted line. But in my arms, she was always *Lolita*. (9)

Hyperbole is the rhetorical device used in the above passage. On the linguistic plane Humbert underlines the name, not the girl. He calls her *Lolita*, *Lo*, *Lola*, *Dolly* and *Dolores*. He emphasizes Lolita's name and disposition by portraying her in five near-synonyms. This overuse of names could possibly produce a coherent nymphet's picture in the reader's mind and would indicate Humbert's fanatical mind style. It is likely that readers will perceive how the hidden textual meaning among the different names is highlighted by phonetic parallelism in the vowel /o/. Certainly we are pursing our lips when we pronounce the vowel /o/ in all the aforementioned names, and the sound pattern contains a resonance which echoes the 'oh' sound. This way of forming the names is harmonized with the semantic content of the extract. This is, I think, intentionally done by Humbert to generate a physical gesture of his mouth, to display that he is having an affair even with Lolita's name. To further bolster this claim, Humbert separates the word Lolita into: 'Lo. Lee. Ta'. He then examines the sound which is produced in the mouth when he pronounces

Lolita: ‘the *tip* of the *tongue taking a trip* of *three* steps down the *palate* to *tap*, at *three*, on the *teeth*.’ It is plausible to feel how the sensual alliteration is shadowed by alliteration in (t), which possibly provokes an acceleration of the rhythm accentuated in the uttering (*tip...tap*). Humbert invites us to play a part physically in his word play. The alliteration of (t) is both seductive and playful, which shows the pleasure he gets in the details of language. In doing so, Humbert portrays himself in such a way that even his tongue sensually enjoys articulating the sound of Lolita’s name. Another example which clearly indicates Humbert’s obsession with Lolita’s name can be seen in part 1, chapter 26: the shortest chapter in the book. Humbert is in jail and he is a bit confused whilst reflecting on the realities of what has happened, yet he still remains focused on the word Lolita:

... Don't think I can go on. *Heart, head* - everything. *Lolita, Lolita, Lolita, Lolita, Lolita, Lolita, Lolita, Lolita, Lolita, Lolita*. Repeat till the page is full, printer. (109)

For the first time after writing ‘more than a hundred pages’ (109), Humbert loses control and for a moment his mask drops (Nabokov and Appel 2000: 375). Humbert’s “*heart*” possibly reveals his obsession with Lolita’s love, whereas his head might be construed as a reference to his confused mind. The repetition of ‘*Lolita*’ until a whole page is filled foregrounds her name.

Thus this repetition adds to the effect of Humbert’s obsessed mind style with Lolita’s name. In both examples, Humbert foregrounds Lolita’s name and forces the reader to create in their mind the same picture that he has of Lolita. However, in the second extract he asks the printer to fulfill his job but the printer does not, so the reader is again indirectly forced to imagine and repeat the name Lolita, ‘*till the page is full*’. As a result, Humbert’s emphasis of Lolita’s name and his extensive use of alliteration explicitly expose his obsession with her name and, by involving readers with his descriptions of Lolita, he is able to mitigate his abnormal mind style to some extent.

5. Conclusion

This paper has concluded how the language of the novel *Lolita* alleviates the paedophile mind style to readers. It is based on the study of the linguistic deviance

approach, in which the researcher demonstrated that linguistic deviance is predominantly manifested in the construction of the pedophile mindstyle. In this paper the term “paedophilic mind style” is used to indicate some features which provide an impression of an idiosyncratic worldview, and which affect readers’ perception and conception of what is happening in the text. The features that the researcher has analyzed are the uses of transitivity patterns, syntax and lexis. Like *The Inheritors*, the theme of *Lolita* is, on one level, *transitivity*: man’s interpretation of his experience of the world, his understanding of its processes and of his own participation in them. The researcher found out that, in *Lolita*, the linguistic expressions of experience are foregrounded through the use of transitivity patterns. It reached a conclusion that, through transitivity patterns, the pedophile disguises his sickening mind style and manipulates the reality of the intercourse scenes; i.e. he portrays a version of the truth, not the real truth of how the sexual acts began. Eventually, in placing Lolita as the doer of most of the action clauses, and placing himself as the object, the pedophile ostensibly attains an alienated tone from the act of committing or commencing the sensual acts.

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تویژینه وهیه کی زمانه وانى شیوازناسی لولیتا-ی نابوکوفه

پوخته

تویژینه وهیه که راسته و خو له و لایه نه زمانه وانیه ده کولیتته وه که له لولیتا-ی نابوکوفه یاریان پیکراوه. ئامانجی تویژینه وه که ش دیاریکردنی ئه وهیه که چون سیستمی زمانه وانى یه کیک له لاده رترین عه قله کانى خه یالى ئه ده بی ئه هوهن ده کات. بویه، له م کاره دا تیۆریکی زمانه وانى به کاردیته بۆ تویژینه وه له بنیاتنانى شیوازی بیرى کاره کتهر- گپه ره وه. ئه م تویژینه وهیه شیکارییه کی زمانه وانى چۆنایه تی بۆ چه ند به شیکی هه لبژیردراو له رۆمانى لولیتا (۱۹۵۵) ی فلادیمیر نابوکوف ئه نجام ده دات. کاره که تویژینه وهیه کی وورد له شیوازه کانى تیپه رپه تی له ده قه که دا ده خاته به رده ست. هه روه ها تویژینه وه که ته حه دداى گشتاندى دیمه نه رۆمانسییه کانى میلز (۱۹۹۵) ده کات له رۆماندا. تویژینه وه که ده گاته ئه و ئه نجامه ی که حاله تی دیکه ش هه ن، وه ک لولیتا، که تیاپاندا مپینه رۆلیکی چالاکی له پرۆسه ی رۆمانسیدا هه یه و نیریش وه رگریکی پاسیقی خۆشه ویستییه. تویژینه وه که ده گاته ئه و درئه نجامه ش که ئه و پیکهاته ی زمانه وانیه ی له لولیتادا بۆ نیشاندا ن و خسته نه رپوه ی عه قلی مندالباز به کاره اتوه، ئامرازکی شیواوه که شیوازی بیرکردنه وه ی ناسایی هامبیرت له ره وتی رۆمانه که دا که م ده کاته وه و به عه قلانى ده کات.

وشه سه ره کییه کان: لولیتا، هامبیرت، مندالباز، تیپه رپه تی، شیوازی بیرکردنه وه، لادان

دراسة نهج لغوي-أسلوبي ل(لوليتا) للكاتب نابوكوف

الملخص

تحاول الدراسة استكشاف الجوانب اللغوية التي تم التلاعب بها في رواية (لوليتا) للكاتب نابوكوف، وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد كيف أن النظام اللغوي يخفف أحد أكثر العقول انحرافاً في الخيال الأدبي، وهكذا، يتبنى البحث الحالي نظرية في علم اللغة للتحقيق في بناء أسلوب العقل الراوي- الشخصية، يقوم هذى البحث بإجراء تحليل لغوي نوعي لعدة مقتطفات مختارة من رواية لوليتا (۱۹۵۵) لفلاديمير نابوكوف. يوفر العمل فحصاً شاملاً

لأنماط التعديّة في النص، كما أنّها تتحدّى تعميم ميلز (١٩٥٥) للمشاهد الرومانسية في الروايات. وتشير نتائج العمل إلى أنّ هناك حالات أخرى، مثل (لوليتا) ، تلعب فيها الأنثى دورًا نشطًا في العملية الرومانسية ويكون الذكر متلقّيًا سلبيًا للحب، توصلت الدراسة أيضًا إلى استنتاج مفاده أنّ البنية اللغوية المستخدمة في (لوليتا) لتمثيل العقل ذوي الميل الجنسي الانحرافي للأطفال (الغلمانيين) هي الأداة الممكنة لتلطيف وترشيد أسلوب عقل (هامبرت) الغريب الأطوار في سياق الرواية.

الكلمات الأساسية: لوليتا ، هامبرت ، ذوي الميل الجنسي الانحرافي للأطفال (الغلمانيين) ، التعديّة ، أسلوب عقل، انحراف.