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A CORPUS DRIVEN STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF ADJECTIVES IN *THE LAST WHITE MAN* (2022) BY MOHSIN HAMID

Nida Zahra[1], Asad Ali Hashmi[2] & Prof. Dr. Mamoona Khan[3]

ABSTRACT

The Last White Man (2022) by Mohsin Hamid is a narrative which symbolizes the physical and psychological struggles of the White people who turned Brown overnight. The novel's portrayal of this transformation is crucial to its investigation of identity, race, and trauma. The research aims to highlight the utility and kinds of frequently used adjectives incorporated by Mohsin Hamid in construction of plot and presentation of significant themes of the novel. The study is based on sequential explanatory mixed methods (Creswell, 2013) to highlight the use of adjectives on lexical level, through corpus tools; AntConc (4.1.4) and CLAWS POS7 tagger and by incorporating the Leech and Short model (1981). Furthermore, the analysis reveals that Mohsin Hamid used attributive and predictive adjectives in abundance to express and visualize the challenges faced by the characters of this novel. Moreover, the research concludes that the adjectives are significantly utilized to enhance the thematic depth of the novel and reflect the physical and psychological dimensions of the characters' transformation. The study outlines the significance of corpus tools in literary stylistic analysis providing a corpus driven approach to understanding linguistic choices that shape literary narrative. It will help the students, and scholars to understand the new horizons of incorporating corpus approaches to stylistic analysis.

Keywords: *Corpus stylistics, literary stylistics, adjectives, lexical choices, the last white man*

[1] Lecturer, Department of English, University of Jhang, nidazahra@uoj.edu.pk
[2] Research Scholar, asadhashmi4444@gmail.com
[3] Professor, Women University Multan, mamona.6231@wum.edu.pk

1. Introduction

Adjectives are essential to explain the intensity of nouns or pronouns that exhibit the soul of a narrative in its objective and subjective setting (Nagy & Townsend 2012). Adjectives are also effective tools to describe the facts and to make a writing impactful. Apart from having an aesthetic effect on a writing, the appropriate use of adjectives also contributes to create a thematic depth which highlight the physical or psychological properties of the individuals presented in the text (Wales, 2014). Numerous studies have been conducted on describing the utility of adjectives in literary texts but the incorporation of corpus linguistics to study the literary texts is less explored so far. The corpus-based methodologies to studies literary texts help to understand the literary text in depth within a limited time span. This study also focuses on exploring a literary text The Last White Man through corpus tools CLAWS POS tagger and AntConc.

The Last White Man (2022) is a recently published novel, written by Mohsin Hamid who is a British Pakistani novelist and an award winning author of *Moth Smoke* (2000), winner of a Betty Trask Award, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007)*, winner of the South Bank Show Annual Award for Literature, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013) winner of the Tiziano Terzani International Literary Prize, fourth novel, *Exit West* (2017), was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize (Khan, 2022). He has also published a book of essays published in 2014 entitled *Discontent and Its Civilizations: Dispatches from Lahore, New York & London* (ibid). Mohsin Hamid is globally admired as his writings are translated into 40 different languages. He is aspired for his personalized style of presenting the global trauma regarding postcolonial effects, and the effects of globalization on cultures, societies, identities, ideologies, and personal attributes of an individual in his literary works (Radin, 2014).

The Last White Man is a depiction of identity crises or inferiority complex that is associated with color of the skin. The story starts with a white man, Anders, who woke up one morning and found himself turned brown. His life is strongly affected by the sudden change and his relationship with his white girlfriend Oona is also affected because of his unrecognizable appearance. Anders went through severe trauma as he fights to fit in the

white community. He was once loved and respected by his Oona and the society but after the change of his skin tone, his life turned upside down to a reckless level. With the passage of time, the whole town turns brown and an air of existential anxieties, identity crisis and the people who used to live a satisfactory life were treated as an outcast because of their dark skin tone. and the only man who remained white was Anders' father. Anders' father is shown sick throughout the novel, and he died before turning brown. Hence, he was the last white man till death, as shown in the novel.

It can be observed that Mohsin Hamid's idea of depicting emotional, psychological and physical sufferings of the characters who transformed from White to Brown comes from Franz Kafka's Metamorphosis. It is a short story about the sentiments of alienation of a character named Gregor Samsa who woke up and found himself turned into an insect. Hamid presents the racial Metamorphosis of his characters starting from the protagonist Anders who found himself segregated and avoided by his loved ones because he turned brown. Moreover, it is quite evident that Hamid presented the real-life crises of the Brown or Black community through his fiction.

Moreover, this study explores novel techniques of discovering, understanding and interpreting literature through stylistic analysis with the help of corpus tools. Lexical choices play a significant role in the meaning making process and adjectives, undeniably being the inseparable part of literature, portray the meaning in a more comprehensive way. So, this study outlines the ways in which adjectives are used to construct, develop, and present the foregrounded themes regarding race, identity, emotional, cultural, and social depiction of humanity, and death in recently published novel The Last White Man (2022) by Mohsin Hamid. Furthermore, it also provides a deep insight into the lexical style of Mohsin Hamid who is globally renowned representative of Pakistani Literature in English. So, this study contributes to the research in the area of Pakistani Literature.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The study aims to explore the types of adjectives in the novel The Last White Man and highlight the role of adjectives in construction and presentation of themes of the novel. Furthermore, the study also highlights the significance of corpus tools in stylistic analysis

1.2.Research Questions

This study answers the following research questions.

- What type of adjectives are chosen by the author in the novel The last white man?
- What is the role of adjectives in construction and presentation of author's thoughts and foregrounded themes of the novel?
- What is the utility of corpus tools in literary stylistic analysis of a text?

2. Literature Review

Language is the dress of thought, and the particular linguistic choices or linguistic habits of an individual can entail the distinctive manner of expression which marks the individual's style and can also provide a reflection of one's personality (Bashiruddin, 2018). The study of style in language or the linguistic style of an author is simply defined as stylistics (Verdonk, 2002). Moreover, Style was initially described as prescriptive because of its rhetorical perspective. Later, the descriptive linguists described 'style' to be the general way of using language which can be called as the general attribute to the language as well (Biber & Conrad, 2009). Leech (2007) defines style to be the linguistic practices considering the 'manner and form' of language.

The manner of representing thoughts in words or through language has a deep connection with the idea, topic or theme being presented in a significant style of a speaker, or author. Hence, the study of linguistics style, manner, or linguistic devices through which an author or a speaker foreground or presents his ideas and themes, is known as stylistic analysis. Arikan (2015) states that in linguistic, stylistic analysis is the process of analyzing linguistic patterns in written and spoken language. In simple words, stylistic analysis helps a reader to deeply understand the meaning of a text by exploring and analyzing linguistic devices. It is also understood that as language cannot be separated from human life, style can neither be separated from language, style comes with and in language. Therefore, the area of stylistics or study of various styles in a language or languages, is vast and multidisciplinary. In this paper, Literary stylistics is the main concern which deals with the study of a literary text.

Literary stylistics is based on the concept that literariness is predominantly a linguistic manifestation of creative and inventive lexical usage that exists on a "cline or continuum" (Carter, 2004). Furthermore, the goal of literary stylistics is to discover language patterns and their roles in a literary work in order to understand structural elements (Starke,2010). Literary stylistics, basically connects linguistic and literature, to study literature for comprehensive literary interpretations manifested through linguistic form in a literary text. The literary stylistic analysis has undergone numerous developments and an updated technique that has revolutionized the authenticity of stylistic analysis is the corpus assisted approach to stylistic analysis.

Corpus stylistics: unlike traditional method of stylistic analysis that studied text on lexical, graphological, semantic and syntactic level (Leech, 2007), analysis the text with computer-based tools by gathering the data in the form of corpora. Sinclair (1991) defines a corpus as a collection of naturally occurring linguistic material, intended to characterize a condition or variant of a language (cited in Biber, et al. 1994). Stubbs (1996) states corpus stylistics to be an innovation in the study of style via the use of computer-aided technique in the analysis of text through language collected and integrated into corpora. This kind of machine-based analysis provides an objective, accurate, and reliable result for both qualitative and quantitative analysis (Biber, 2011). According to Stubbs (2007), the use of technology or a software for data analysis has great significance in literature because software helps to highlight the textual features that can be ignored by literary critics in a manual analysis of a text.

Moreover, corpus stylistic analysis stems in corpus linguistics which aids to provide novel methodologies to employ computational techniques for lexical analysis of texts. It has opened novel areas for factual, objective, and quantitative analysis of literary text; therefore, it is logical to mention that corpus linguistics through corpus assisted stylistic analysis has profoundly revolutionized methodologies and approaches in the domain of literary research (McIntyre et. al. 2019). This article is based on highlighting the foregrounded themes and ideas through a corpus assisted stylistic analysis of adjectives in *The Last White Man* to examine the lexical style of Mohsin

Hamid. Adjectives are the modifiers that portray a clear meaning or description in association to the noun. In literature, a precise and well-placed adjective may enhance or elucidate an image (Zhusupova, et. al. 2021). In stylistics, the interpretation of meaning of text through close examination of adjectives is dealt on the lexical level of analysis (Leech, 2007).

Study of adjectives has been a focus of research by many researchers in the field of corpus stylistics. Mahmood et al. (2013) conducted a corpus based stylistic research to examine the gender handling in Pakistani English Fiction and British English Fiction and the focus was on adjectives. A large corpus of one million words was easily handled for a mixed method analysis and it was concluded that Pakistani society faces a challenge of gender discrimination. Women portrayed in Pakistani Fiction, present a window into Pakistani conservative, narrow-minded, and male dominant culture. On the contrary, British society is a well-informed, moderate society. Men and women are afforded the same rights. Women are not exploited, and they are free to choose their own destiny.

Corpus driven research is not only accurate in quantitative analysis, but it also aids interpreting the text through insightful qualitative analysis. Mehmood et al. (2014) conducted a research based on an assumption that the female writers intend to use more adjectives. Sidhwa's fiction was thoroughly analyzed by using corpus tools and it was concluded that Sidhwa's use of adjectives, in qualitative sense, is justified according to the requirement of the text.

Arsalan et al. (2022) analyzed adjectives through corpus assisted stylistic analysis, highlighted that men and women authors have different style in their compositions. A large corpus of four novels was smoothly handled by AntConc. and CLAWS POS tagger and it was concluded that male dominancy was dominated by the use of adjectives by males and female authors made intense use of adjectives highlighting feminine delicate and sensitive nature.

Yasir et al. (2021) examined the difference in the use of adjectives in Urdu and English writers; Hamid's Moth Smoke was also part of data analysis. With the help of corpus software, the researcher identified the use of adjectives in English novels whereas the Urdu novels were studied manually.

The research concluded that, in comparison to the English novels, a more frequent use of adjectives was found in Urdu novels. Moreover, the researcher also emphasized the importance and usefulness of corpus tools.

Mohsin Hamid, as an accomplished representative of Pakistani in literature in English, is widely read and taught throughout the world. Researchers, especially Pakistani research scholars focus on dissecting Hamid's work for contribution in the field of Pakistani Literature in English or Asian English Literature. His works present his effort to elucidate global themes of racial, cultural, ethical, and monetary discrimination and he provides the idea of existence and co-existence (Scot, 2014). Moreover, all of his literary contributions have been a focus of research from multiple angles but less of the work is found based on corpus stylistic analysis. The Use of Adjectives *in How To Get Filthy Rich In Rising Asia* was explored by Faiza et al. (2018) through close reading, keeping in mind the choice of adjectives by the author.

The novel, *The Last White Man (2022)*, chosen for analysis in this research is a latest novel of Mohisn Hamid, therefore it is selected to add to the knowledge in corpus stylistic study of literature and the research in Pakistani English Literature. Moreover, this study, not only is based on the analysis of adjective in a latest novel of Mohsin Hamid but it also incorporates the use of corpus tools in studying literature.

3. Theory and Method

This research is descriptive, exploratory, and interpretative in nature based on explanatory sequential mixed methods design. An explanatory sequential mixed methods is a combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis, and interpretation; the quantitative analysis is followed by qualitative analysis and the results are connected for valid conclusion (Creswell, 2013).

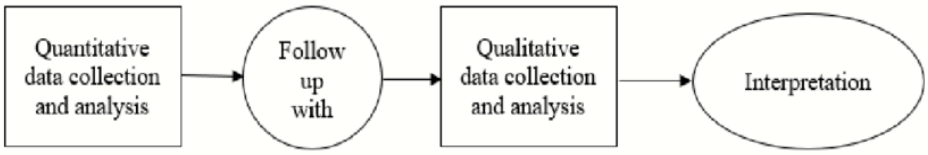


Figure 1. Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods (Creswell et al. 2011 cited in Subedi, 2016)

Furthermore, the quantitative analysis of the study includes the frequency analysis of the abundantly used adjectives which is conducted through the Corpus tools; AntConc. (4.1.4). As it is a corpus driven stylistic analysis of adjectives in *The Last White Man (2022)*, so the text was tagged through the ClawsS7 tagger and later the tagged set was used for collection of frequently used adjectives through AntConc. A list of twelve adjectives, highest in frequency, were studied by using the N-Gram and KWIC features of Antconc. (4.1.4). To determine the types of adjectives used by Mohsin Hamid in his novel the selected adjectives were further studied considering the checklist given by Leech & Short (1981), Lexical category (p. 76). Furthermore, the selected adjectives were analyzed through Key word in Context (KWIC) feature of AntConc (4.1.4), for qualitative interpretations of the text.

The researchers and experts stress upon the incorporation of corpus linguistics into the various fields of language and literature. Corpus linguistics, has brought a prominent revolution in exploring and analyzing the text through word frequency, concordance analysis and lexical analysis which also highlight the process of production of a text and its implications (Afzaal, Hu, Chishti, & Khan, 2019; Barbara, Afzaal, & Aldayel, 2024). Therefore, the corpus methodology is opted to conduct the stylistic analysis of the Last White Man. Furthermore, the framework opted for the analysis of the types of adjectives is presented by Leech and Short (1981). The framework is based on the notion that the literary texts in all the forms can be divided into several linguistic levels (lexical level, grammatical level, figures of speech, cohesion and coherence, contextual level) which can separately be

analyzed to understand to reveal their contribution in the construction of the meaning of the text. This study is centered upon the lexical level which includes the choice of words including their frequency, type (e.g. noun, verb, adjective etc.) and connotation.

3.1. Corpus of the Study

The corpus of the study is the novel The Last White Man written by Mohsin Hamid. The e-copy of the novel was downloaded in notepad and tagged through CLAWS Pos tagger. The tagged file was studied through AntConc. 4.1.4.

4. Data Analysis & Discussion

Mohsin Hamid has abundantly used adjectives in his novel The Last White Man (2022) and this abundant use of adjectives sets the tone of the text as shown in the analysis.

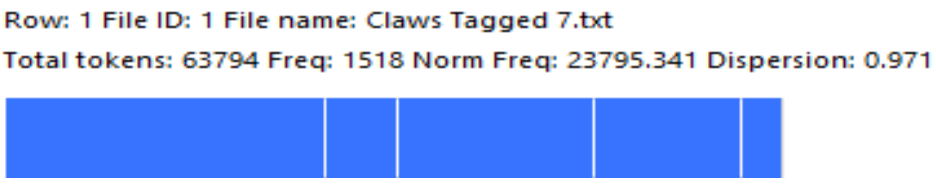
4.1.Quantitative Analysis

The selected text was tagged through CLAWS7, and four types of adjectives were found in the text reviewed considering tag-set S7 with the help of AntConc (4.1.4). The types of adjectives are mentioned below.

Sr.	Adjective	Tags	Frequency
1.	General Adjectives	JJ	1518
2.	General Comparative Adjectives	JJR	75
3.	General Superlative Adjectives	JJT	15
4.	Catenative Adjectives	JK	06

Table 1: Types of Adjectives (CLAWS7)

Furthermore, the dispersion of these adjectives was also checked in order to highlight the importance of adjectives in construction of the plot, with the help of AntConc 4.1.4.



The quantitative analysis of general adjective dispersion in the plot shows that these adjectives play pivotal part in construction of the plot as the maximum plot is covered with such type of adjectives in Mohsin Hamid's novel, *The Last White Man (2022).*

Figure 2. Use of General Adjectives (JJ) in Plot (AntConc)



Figure 3. Use of General Comparative Adjectives (JJR) in Plot (AntConc)

It is furthermore observed that comparative adjectives are also frequently dispersed in the plot for construction and representation of meaning. The use of superlative adjectives and catenatives is also present in the plot but the frequency is low as compared to the frequency of JJ and JJR, therefore, the dispersion figures are omitted to save the space.

Furthermore, the list of highest frequency adjectives, selected for further analysis is given below.

Sr. No.	Adjective	Frequency
1.	Dark	73
2.	Different	32
3.	Other	30
4.	White	22
5.	Good	20
6.	Old	16
7.	Small	16

8.	Strange	15
9.	new, only, sure	14
10.	brown, certain, familiar, long, right	12
11.	big, dead, full, hard, impossible, late, little, pale	09
12.	alone, crazy, online, real, strong, clear	08

Table 2. Highest Frequency Adjectives in The Last White Man (2022)

This section dealt with the quantitative study of adjectives in selected text, and it can be observed that the adjectives are conveying deeper meanings. For instance, the highest frequent used adjective, 'dark' is a synonym to the word 'black' which is the antonym of the word 'white' that is the ruling adjective chosen by the author for conveying a message in the title of this novel *'The Last White Man.'* According to Leech & Short (1981), the type of adjective determines the true interpretation of the text, So, the adjective 'white' is attributive, used to describe the physical attribute of the noun 'man'. Furthermore, it is clear that the adjective used in the title, and the most frequently used adjective 'dark' of the novel have a significant role in fabricating the major theme of the novel. Hence, the first interpretation, based on the quantitative analysis of this novel, results in determining that the racial issues can be the foreground theme of this novel.

4.2. Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis is based on the analysis of the most frequently used adjectives with the help of KWIC (key word in context) feature of AntConc (4.1.4). The types of adjectives with reference to Leech & Short (1981) will also be highlighted in analysis.

a. 'Dark' as an Adjective

The word 'dark' is mostly used as an attributive adjective, highlighting the physical attributes of the nouns used; 'man, people, women, person, stranger, guy, body, faces, head, men, hosts, and things.' The word adjective is also used as predictive to create its psychological, visual and emotive effect. A few selected instances are mentioned below.

Hit no.	Lines
23.	Street was dark…..
24.	Andres was dark and Oona was light….
26.	The night was dark, a deep abiding dark…..
36.	The sky not yet dark……
42.	As a threat, as dark as he was…..
43.	His boss was very dark…..
47.	No safer for being dark…….

Table 3. CLAWS7 tagged text in KWIC AntConc software (4.1.4)

The analysis depicts that Hamid used the adjective 'dark' to describe his protagonist and for creating an emotive and visual effect in the novel by describing the street as dark and describing the emotions of not being safe as a dark member of society. The adjective dark is predicted as a threat to life which supports the interpretation that 'dark' is predominantly used by Hamid for creating a negative, or pessimistic tone in the novel.

a. 'Different' as an Adjective

The adjective 'different' is used in both the kinds, as attributive and predictive. The following excerpt is selected for analysis because the word is used thrice as an attributive adjective to describe physical attributes of the town, place, and the country. It creates a visual effect about the observation of protagonist and the effect of that observation psychologically on the protagonist. The world seemed different to Anders because he was noticing more dark people than white, and he was uncomfortable even being one of them. This uncovers another main idea of the novel highlighted through adjectives by Hamid that being dark is the sign of being inferior for the majority of humankind.

> *"Anders noticed just how many dark faces there were, and how the town was a different town now, a town in a different place, a different country, with all these dark people around, more dark people than white people, and it made Anders uneasy, even*

though he was dark too,….” [Ch. 11, p. 66, (hit. 64-66)]

There are some other instances where Hamid used the word ‘different’ as a predictive adjective for a better understanding of visual and emotive expression.

Hit no.	Lines
75-76.	“the kiss felt different because her lips felt different, or his lips felt different on her different lips,….”
91.	“the weight would be different, because Anders was different ot if all this was just in Anders mind……”

Table 4. CLAWS7 tagged text in KWIC AntConc software (4.1.4)

After the study of KWIC, it is observed that Oona also turned dark, therefore both the main characters felt different during the kiss. The emotive representation is quite significant in the play to understand the psychological effects of being dark or turning dark from white. Mohsin Hamid has artfully used the adjective to clarify the theme of race and colour.

b. ‘Other’ as an Adjective

Hamid used the adjective ‘other’ mostly to maintain a meaningful semantic cohesion. For instance, ‘in other words, on the other hand, other people, the other night, any other man, other reason, no other reason, at other times, other branches, his other hand’ etc.

c. ‘White’ as an Adjective

‘White’ is highly significant adjective of this novel as it also occurs in the title, ‘the last white man’. In the title, this word ‘white’ is attributively used for describing the color of the man, by reading the novel we can understand that Hamid highlighted an outbreak of an overnight change in colour of the people from white to dark. The whole town, gradually, fills with people who turned brown from white, and the only man was the protagonist’s father who died as a white man. So, the title of the novel is on Anders’ father.

> *"and Anders's pale father was the only pale person present, the only pale person left in the entire town, for there were by that point no others, and then his casket was closed and his burial was occurring and he was committed to the soil,* ***the last white man****, and after that, after him, there were none." (hit. 140, chap. 13)*

Furthermore, this adjective is frequently used as an attributive adjective in the novel, describing the colour of the people and the emotions attached to being brown from white. A few selected excerpts are as follows.

Hit no.	Lines
124	"people suddenly not being white,…."
131	"a white man had indeed shot a man, but also that the white man and the dark man were the same."
130	"…discomfort on seeing this white girl kiss this dark man."
135	"….those who had been white were not hunted down and caged or whipped or killed"

Table 5 CLAWS7 tagged text in KWIC AntConc software (4.1.4)

The instances above indicate that adjectives used by Hamid in the novel entirely communicate the whole theme, tone and mood of the novel. These adjectives are both attributive and predictive to express the soul of the novel. It can be observed that the gradual change of skin color of the residents of the whole town spread an atmosphere of discomfort among people who thought the only way out of this pandemic was to kill the dark-skinned individuals. The air became filled with violence as the dark-skinned people were forced to stay at their homes to save their lives from gunshots. Based on the analysis, it can be interpreted that this novel has a post-pandemic effect as it was written after COVID-19. Therefore, Mohsin has shown the change of skin tone as a kind of viral epidemic, and the effects of the epidemic are maintained by the

fear, stress, anxiety, violence and cruelty of whites towards the whites-turned-brown.

The analysis revealed the types of adjectives used by Mohsin Hamid in his novel 'The Last White Man' and how these adjectives are helpful in highlighting the theme of this novel. Moreover, it is observed that the novel is about the 'colour struggle' or the racial struggles of the people who are discriminated against their skin color. This analysis is evident that the novel is interwoven in the themes of racial discrimination and class struggle. Identity crises also run parallel to the racial struggles which is a post-colonial theme. So, the analysis confirms the validity of the findings of Kazim et. al. (2024) who stated that, "The Last White Man presents complexities of identity, race, and belonging within a rapidly transforming society. It thematizes identity in a postcolonial context, and racial transformation and its effects on personal and collective identities" (p. 201).

5. Conclusion

This research concludes that Mohsin Hamid made abundant use of adjectives in this novel to communicate the visual and emotive image of the theme (table.1). The tagged text revealed that general adjectives are highest frequent adjectives of the novel. Figures 2 & 3 signify that the plot is tightly woven with the adjectives. According to the checklist provided by Leech & Short (1981), the lexical choices by Mohsin Hamid on the level of adjectives outline both micro and macro themes of the play. The analysis revealed that the novel deals with racial discrimination on macro level and the effects of the racial discrimination on one's identity, psychology, social integrity and unity, fear, cruelty, and violence are micro themes built through predictive and attributive adjectives on their emotive, physical and visual level. The findings align with another study conducted by Jabeen et. al. (2024) who states that Hamid (2022) "shows the conflict, emotions of rejection, hopelessness, and fear that come with a change in identity" (p. 1035). So, the study confirms that the adjectives play a crucial part in the construction of theme in a literary text. Furthermore, the novel also has post-pandemic effects and globally it can also relate to the genuine struggle of the people who struggle to get accepted in society. Hence, the findings prove that the adjectives are note only the descriptive elements to enhance the aesthetic

effect in a text but adjectives are also instrumental as these can be studied to understand the themes of a text.

Moreover, this research demonstrates the efficacy of using corpus tools in stylistic analysis and it also concludes that the significance of corpus tools for comprehensive understanding of a text is highly acknowledged and recommended for literary stylistic analysis. The study is limited to analyzing a single text of Mohsin Hamid, focusing on one element of stylistic analysis; adjectives, which may overlook some other narrative techniques of the author. So, the study leaves a future scope for analyzing the other linguistic features of the text and the style of Mohsin Hamid by analyzing all of his writings by incorporating corpus linguistics.

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